

WHO AM I: EQUIPPING BLACK MEN TO EVANGELIZE
TO YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN
IN MODERN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

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The context of this project was Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. The problem present in the context was that male leaders were not properly equipped to evangelize to young African American men in the community. If these leaders were exposed to a historically accurate Christianity acknowledging the contributions of people of African descent, then they would be more equipped to share their faith. This project was conducted over six weeks. Data was collected using pre- and post-project surveys, group discussions, journaling assignments, and individual interviews. As a result, leaders became better equipped to evangelize effectively.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I give all honor and glory to God, who has been my strength, guide, and sustainer throughout this journey. Without His grace, this project would not have been possible.

I extend heartfelt thanks to the faculty and staff of United Theological Seminary for their unwavering support, academic guidance, and commitment to the formation of faithful leaders. Your encouragement and expertise have been instrumental in shaping both this project and my ministerial growth.

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To the finest collection of scholars in all the land, the Pointer, Brown, and Goodman Fellows, thank you for all the memories we have created together and for your support. We have become family, and there is no other group I would rather be a part of.

To my children, Hope, Kimonie, Kashanae, Kanysha, Courtlyn, Caleb, and Khalil—your laughter, hugs, and presence gave me the joy and motivation I needed to

press forward. And finally, to my beloved wife, Lakeisha—thank you for your patience, prayers, and persistent belief in me. Your love has been a steady anchor through every late night and long draft. This work is as much yours as it is mine.

May this project bear fruit in the lives of those it was created to serve. It is my hope that the insights, prayers, and labors poured into these pages will continue to uplift, inspire, and empower leaders for years to come. May the seeds sown through this work grow into movements of healing, justice, and transformation—not just within churches, but throughout the communities and cultures we are called to serve.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my sons, Caleb and Khalil, and my grandson, Kanan. May you continue to grow with the courage to boldly proclaim your faith, knowing that your ancestors played a vital role in shaping and safeguarding the faith we now call Christianity.

INTRODUCTION

The context of this project is the Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., located in Ward Eight, a historically underserved community with a predominantly African American population. Ward 8 is characterized by high poverty rates, elevated levels of unemployment, and limited access to quality education and healthcare. These factors have contributed to a general sense of disconnection and disenfranchisement among its residents, particularly young Black men. Within this environment, the church has long served as a bastion of hope, spiritual guidance, and community empowerment. However, in recent years, Greater Fellowship has witnessed a noticeable decline in male participation, especially among younger demographics. This decline reflects a broader trend across many urban Black churches, where traditional ministry models have failed to resonate with the current cultural and social realities of Black men.

The hypothesis for this project was: If male leaders at Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church were exposed to a historically accurate understanding of Christianity that includes the contributions of Africans and African Americans, then they would be more equipped to effectively evangelize to young Black men in the surrounding community. This hypothesis was informed and shaped by biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations. The project sought to demonstrate that spiritual

transformation becomes more effective when it is rooted in cultural affirmation and communal connection.

Biblically, this project was grounded in Acts 20:7–12, the story of Paul raising Eutychus from the dead. In this narrative, Paul preaches long into the night, and a young man named Eutychus falls from a window and dies, only to be revived by Paul's intervention. This passage provided a framework for relational ministry, highlighting how the early church embraced communal gatherings and the hope of resurrection. Paul's act of restoring Eutychus served as a metaphor for the restoration needed among young Black men who have metaphorically "fallen" from their place in the church and community due to systemic neglect, spiritual alienation, and cultural erasure. This theme of restoration is echoed in other biblical texts, such as Ezekiel 37, where God breathes life into dry bones—symbolizing the reawakening of a people who have lost hope.

Theologically, this project draws heavily from Black Liberation Theology, particularly the work of James Cone. Cone asserts that “God is on the side of the oppressed” and that the gospel must be interpreted in a way that affirms the humanity and dignity of Black people. He emphasizes Jesus as the ultimate liberator—one who identifies with the marginalized and empowers them to reclaim their voice. This theological lens reinforces the importance of evangelism that does not demand assimilation but instead celebrates cultural identity. The theology underpinning this project is not simply abstract; it functions as a moral imperative to challenge systems of oppression and to uplift those who have been historically excluded from traditional theological narratives.

Historically, the life and ministry of Nat Turner were examined as an example of African American resistance, faith, and leadership under oppression. Turner, a preacher and revolutionary, embodies the fusion of spiritual conviction and social action. His story offers a powerful counternarrative to portrayals of Black passivity in the face of injustice. In this project, Turner's legacy served as both a historical anchor and a source of inspiration for Black men reclaiming their spiritual and cultural agency.

Interdisciplinary perspectives, including sociology, education, and cultural anthropology, also shaped this project. Studies in leadership development and mentorship affirm that when young men are guided by relatable role models who affirm their worth, they are more likely to engage in positive life choices and spiritual growth.

This document is organized into six chapters. Chapter One, Ministry Focus, describes the church's context, including its demographic shifts and challenges in evangelism. It also traces a lived ministry journey and its alignment with the project's goals. Chapter Two, Biblical Foundations, examines Acts 20:7-12 through the lens of Black Liberation Theology and contextual interpretation, highlighting the themes of resurrection, community, and hope as essential. Chapter Three, Historical Foundations, explores Nat Turner's life and the legacy of African American resistance to cultural erasure. Chapter Four, Theological Foundations, delves into theological insights that validate the spiritual identity and contributions of Black people within Christian history. Chapter Five, Interdisciplinary Foundations, integrates research from education, sociology, and leadership studies to inform practical ministry strategies. Finally, Chapter Six, Project Analysis, details the implementation, methodologies, outcomes, and reflections on the project's effectiveness. Finally, Chapter Six, Project Analysis, details

the implementation, methodologies, outcomes, and reflections on the project's effectiveness.

The implemented project consisted of a six-week training program for male leaders in the church, focused on biblical interpretation, African and African American church history, and relational evangelism. Data was collected through pre- and post-project surveys, group discussions, journaling, and individual interviews. The findings indicated that participants gained confidence, knowledge, and clarity regarding their ability to share their faith with cultural authenticity. They became more intentional in their witness, particularly to younger Black men in the community, and demonstrated increased enthusiasm for continued engagement in ministry.

This project showed that equipping Black men with accurate historical and theological tools enhances their ability for culturally resonant evangelism. By reclaiming their identity, embracing their spiritual heritage, and engaging in relational ministry, these leaders now act as more effective witnesses during a time when authenticity, representation, and connection are essential to the growth and relevance of the Black Church.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

This work will examine the context of the Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church (GFFGBC). Greater Fellowship was founded thirty-five years ago and has had one pastor. The church is located in Ward Eight of Southeast Washington, D.C., and has maintained a majority African American membership since its inception. In recent years, the congregation has been predominantly female. There is an opportunity to strengthen connections with young African American males.

I have surmised that the gap in female and male membership is due to outdated methodology for sharing the church's belief system with young men. These men comprise a substantial portion of the population of Ward Eight in Washington, D.C., where the church is located. As time passes, this population feels less connected to join and/or stay connected to the church.

Having examined the context and considered my ministry skills and interests, I have determined how I can best address the challenges at Greater Fellowship. I have developed a keen interest in the history of Africans and African Americans in Christian history. I am passionate about teaching the Bible and its interpretation in a relevant context to modern culture. The history of Christianity in the world and the United States has far too long been taken out of context, with incorrect and incomplete theories

designed to erase certain aspects related to Africans and African Americans from its background. As someone with an intelligent Black father and influenced over time by strong Black men with whom I have had personal relationships, as well as those I have admired from a distance, I aim to be an example to my sons and other young men over whom I may have an influence.

I conclude that my interests and skill set align with Greater Fellowship's mission to train male leaders in effectively evangelizing to young Black men. In past years, men have responded more to individual connections and identity than to mass conversion. I believe that codifying a methodology focused on these personal connections will increase interest in connecting with the church. The church should view each of these young men as individuals with unique needs and concerns while also recognizing their shared need for identity.

Context

The Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church is in Southeast Washington, D.C., in Ward Eight. Its founder, Dr. Carey E. Pointer, Jr., is and has always been its only serving Senior Pastor. Initially located in District Heights, Maryland, the church moved to Washington, D.C., in 1989 after two years of operation.

Washington, D.C., is divided into eight wards, which serve as the city's main political subdivisions. They were originally designed to ensure equal representation for the city's population. Ward Eight is one of these wards and is situated in the southeast section of Washington, D.C. Ward Eight was the last ward established in the city, receiving approval from Congress in 1895. Ward Eight is a constantly evolving area. The

area's metro system provides convenient access to colleges, government jobs, and shopping centers in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia.

For the past several decades, Ward Eight has encountered many challenges, including an education and employment gap, food deserts, a high rate of health issues, and, more recently, an increase in violent crime. According to 2020 census data, Ward Eight is the poorest and least populated of all eight wards. The ward's population stood at just more than 79,000, reflecting a 1.7% increase from 2010. Comprising 71.5% females and 28.5% males, this population includes 13,700 children, with approximately 57% of men and 51% of women aged between eighteen and sixty-four years old. Only 7-8% of the population is older than sixty-four years old, indicating that Ward Eight has a much younger population compared to the average age in Washington, D.C.¹

Due to being a low-income ward, it consists of more than 90% Black and African American residents, and there is a considerable number of residents with limited English proficiency. As a result of gentrification in other areas of the District, there is growing concern that long-term residents may be displaced from Ward Eight. Over the years, the socio-economic status of its residents has sharply declined. Unemployment and poverty rates have remained high in this area. However, Ward Eight also has some of the lowest housing and rental costs in the District. If the job situation improves soon, more low-income families, as well as White families, are likely to move into Ward Eight, leading to greater diversity of race, ethnicity, and social class. Additionally, the socio-economic

¹ Washington, DC, Office of Planning, "2020 Census: Information and Data," DC.gov, <https://planning.dc.gov/publication/2020-census-information-and-data>.

status of its residents may improve. The Ward is predominantly Christian, though a small percentage of residents are affiliated with various other religions.

The Greater Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church was founded on December 13, 1987, by Pastor Carey E. Pointer, Jr. Seeking to move away from some of the more traditional elements of the Baptist Church, Pastor Pointer gathered a small group of charter members to establish the church. The announcement was made at Providence Baptist Church with the support of Pastors Carey E. Pointer, Sr., the late Bishop Ricardo Brent, Charles Doom, and Lionel P. Pointer, Jr., among others. The foundation of the church is based on the early church, as described in Acts 2:36-47. Sunday morning worship services were held at Masonic Lodge #218, located at 5922 Marlboro Pike in District Heights, Maryland. The church provided Christian Bible Training (CBT) and Church School for all age groups, along with a regular worship service each Sunday. Home Bible Study took place every Wednesday night, as the church family visited the homes of different members each week for genuine fellowship and study. On April 8, 1989, after a long search for a more permanent worship space, the church relocated to Washington, D.C., at 814 Alabama Avenue, S.E., in Ward Eight of the city.

As the church and Pastor Pointer's theology embraced more progressive ideals, such as licensing and ordaining women in the preaching ministry, he sought to partner with a fellowship that more accurately reflected his teachings and practices. This led Greater Fellowship to join the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship, which was then led by Bishop Paul S. Morton and in the District by the late Bishop Ricardo Brent. At this time, Greater Fellowship transitioned from Missionary Baptist Church to Full

Gospel Baptist, adopting a name that more closely aligned with its newly embraced beliefs and values.

Since its inception, Greater Fellowship has produced eight men and eleven women who are licensed to preach the Gospel. Additionally, a husband-and-wife team, the late Rev. Richard Carthorne, who served as Assistant to the Pastor, and his wife, the late Minister Arthurmae Carthorne, dedicated several decades to the church. On Sunday, February 8, 2004, Elder Kathy E. Pointer was consecrated and appointed as Co-Pastor of the Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church.

Over the years, attendance has fluctuated, but the church is at its strongest, with more than 120 active members filling every seat in a relatively small sanctuary. The current active membership is just more than eighty, with more than 70% of members being female and more than 60% being older than fifty years of age. Members can attend both in person and virtually through various streaming methods.

Evangelism has always been a vital ministry of the church, as pastors consistently seek to witness to and support the “least of these.” Outreach events like “Come as You Are Sunday” and “Community Day” have happened regularly over the years. Traditional methods of evangelism include The Four Spiritual Laws, The Roman Road to Salvation, and the Good News Glove, primarily utilized for underage converts. Greater Fellowship remains committed to the belief that God established the church with intention and purpose. The Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church's mandate is to “Go, Teach, Baptize, and Teach,” as instructed in Matthew 28:19-20.

Ministry Journey

My ministry journey began as a young child at Mt. Joy Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. I started as a layperson, serving as a junior deacon in the children's church, transitioned to singing in choirs, and eventually became officially licensed as a gospel minister. There has almost always been a ministry aspect to my life. At each stage, both in and out of ministry, I have encountered strong Black men who have influenced my life, ministry, and leadership style. These men were successful and at or near the top of their fields, helping me identify with and aspire to be like them in some small way. I have come to realize the profound impact that Black male role models have had on my life. They have played and continue to play a crucial role in shaping my identity and self-esteem, having shown me that I can embrace my culture while striving for success. Seeing successful Black men in various fields has inspired me to pursue my ministry and life goals and has provided valuable guidance in navigating the unique challenges I have faced. Their mentorship has helped me develop essential life skills and fostered a sense of resilience, allowing me to tackle obstacles with confidence.

Moreover, these men have created supportive environments where I have been able to express my emotions and fears without judgment. They have taught me the importance of giving back to my community and challenging the negative stereotypes often associated with Black masculinity and Christianity. Their presence has offered not just hope but also a concrete pathway to success, having demonstrated that achieving one's goals is possible despite the hurdles. Through their guidance, I have felt empowered to forge my path and inspire others in return.

Perhaps the greatest of these influences has been my father and pastor, Dr. Carey E. Pointer, Jr. His approach to preaching and connecting with people consistently reflects in my life and ministry. My father has been in the preaching ministry longer than any other endeavor in his life. Watching both up close and from a distance, I learned about the importance of preparation and study in preaching. In my younger years, I was unaware that I subscribed to any particular theological perspective. All I knew was that I studied the Bible as my father did. Hearing several men, either friends of my father or relatives, influenced my spiritual journey. Pastors Stephen Nash, Jerome Kirby, and Lionel Pointer, among others, played a significant role in shaping my understanding of the sacred text.

As the internet became an increasingly influential part of our daily lives, I began reading and subscribing to religious blogs. Through discovering various viewpoints, I gradually learned the differences between Protestant beliefs, such as monergism and synergism, along with the groups that adhered to them, like Calvinists and Arminians. During this time, I encountered terms that resonated with my theological perspective, such as “Black Tulip,” and I began to lean more conservatively. I also found that some African Americans referred to my faith as “the White man’s religion” imposed on Africans during slavery. My desire to fact-check and counter any misinformation I encountered often led me to hours of informal research on various topics.

During one of these research sessions, I first discovered facts that I had only previously heard in passing: the significant influence of Africa and Africans on the Bible and early Christian doctrine. Discoveries like the African presence at the Council of Nicaea and the early Ethiopian Churches were new to me and renewed my confidence

that the faith of my youth could truly be the faith of my adult life. While processing all this information, I finally accepted my call to the preaching ministry, confessing to my pastor and father in the year 2000, and preached my initial sermon in December 2001.

Shortly after my initial sermon, I developed a greater interest in scholarship. I began reading more, both online and by purchasing books recommended by my pastor and other preachers I knew at the time. Eventually, I sought to formalize my scholarship by attending an online university in Louisiana. This seminary had a more fundamentalist approach, and I often disagreed with some of their theological doctrines. However, it compelled me to engage honestly with the texts I studied and prompted me to clarify my beliefs, as I started to see contradictions in some of the doctrines being taught. After completing my bachelor's degree, I paused my scholarly pursuits as I was directed elsewhere in both life and ministry.

Following my divorce in 2016, I rekindled my academic aspirations by attending the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University. It was here that I earned my Master of Divinity degree. During my time at Virginia Union, everything I thought I believed was challenged by many of the more liberal-leaning professors. They encouraged us to understand our beliefs and to substantiate them based on scholarship, both within and outside of the sacred text. One class was specifically designed to deconstruct our formal theology, helping us rebuild it based on what we truly believed about our faith. This experience pushed me towards a more bibliocentric approach and away from traditional theological labels, teaching me that no single label could accurately capture the essence of my theology.

What remained true and was reinforced during my time at Virginia Union was the understanding that Christianity is indeed a religion and faith that African Americans can be proud to call their own. This is despite increasing calls from other groups who stated that we needed a religion that many believed more accurately reflected our culture and addressed the needs of African Americans. My experience at Virginia Union reminded me that Christianity is indeed part of our culture, and with the proper hermeneutic, it addresses the needs of our culture and the world as a whole. At this time, I began to think about how to share my reinforced beliefs with others, particularly African Americans.

Simultaneously, during this period of my religious journey, I was fortunate in my secular career to witness the presence of men of African descent who exemplified strong leadership in companies that were not always the most diverse. From my first manager at a movie theater, Mr. Norman Hires; to my co-managers at the International House of Pancakes, Randy and Anthony; a department manager at JC Penney, Mr. John Dockery; and a regional vice president at the audio-visual company where I currently work, Brett Williams; I admire the way these men conducted themselves in professional situations, interacted with others, and mentored and enabled me to believe that I could indeed advance in a world that was not always set up for my success. Even during the darkest periods of my life, I found examples of these African American men who succeeded by being the best they could be.

In my current role as an assistant pastor, I support our senior pastor in preaching and teaching. My preaching remains expository, aiming to explain the text in a way that resonates with people's everyday lives, while consistently highlighting the African influence in our scripture and faith. Additionally, I have a passion for sharing the Word

and my skills, both in secular and ministry contexts, with young Black men, who often see their faith as a minor part of their lives due to external influences and varying levels of knowledge and maturity. I think about the impact that sharing my faith has on young Black men. This aspect of my ministry is not just an obligation; it is a passion deeply rooted in my own experiences, the stories I have heard, and the needs I see within my community.

In life, I have seen firsthand the challenges that young Black men face—the weight of societal expectations, systemic inequalities, and often, the struggle for identity and purpose. I remember my own journey of searching for meaning, grappling with faith, and finding solace in a community that embraced me. It was through mentorship, encouragement, and shared experiences that I discovered the transformative power of faith. Now, I feel a responsibility to pass that on to future generations.

In my ministry, I prioritize building relationships with these young men. It begins with listening—truly listening—to their stories, struggles, and aspirations. Establishing trust is crucial; they need to know that I see them, hear them, and understand the world from their perspective. Sharing my faith isn't merely about preaching; it's about walking alongside them in their journeys and demonstrating that faith can be a source of strength and resilience.

Through my own actions and stories, I hope to be a living testament to the principles of faith. I share my successes and my failures, my joys and my pains. This transparency fosters an environment where these young men feel safe to express their concerns and doubts. I want them to understand that faith is not about perfection but growth—a journey filled with lessons and opportunities for transformation.

Sharing my faith with young Black men is not just part of my ministry; it is a personal passion. It is about connection, empowerment, and transformation in a society that often downplays its potential. I remain committed to being a source of truth and encouragement, witnessing the incredible impact that faith can have on the lives of others.

Synergy

When analyzing the context of Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., several attributes become apparent. As a relatively recent church plant, less than forty years old, many members who started with Pastor Pointer are still alive and have vivid memories of separating from the previous church to establish Greater Fellowship. This loyalty can serve as both a positive attribute and a hindrance, as the fond memories of the past are often recalled, and dependence on certain traditions persists. Historically, the church's membership has been predominantly female, with many married women attending services without their spouses. The congregation tends to be older, with most attendees being over fifty years of age. In contrast, the surrounding ward has a sizable number of young African American males, highlighting a clear gap in potential membership for the church.

Serving in one of the city's poorer wards makes it clear that finances are a significant issue. I aim to attract young, informed African American males who are willing to contribute to the church's financial well-being and ministry outreach. Additionally, this approach can address multiple challenges facing young males. Those who might be married or have families will be more inclined to bring their families if the

African American male is seen as a vital part of the church. The church needs to bridge the gap in information being presented. The methods of evangelism, although subtle, have been employed for nearly the entire history of the church and have remained largely unchanged for several years or decades. Future evangelism strategies, particularly for young African American males, must tackle the obstacles arising from the information presented to them by their peers and online. This information may hinder them from viewing Christianity as a viable faith option. The ability to identify with their faith is a strong draw for those searching for a higher power to guide their lives. My journey, both in and out of ministry, has evolved to a point where I take pride in both my race and my faith. The intersection of these two aspects cannot be ignored, and I seek to share that pride with other African American males. My education, the mentorship I have received, and the experiences I gained all enable me to show others how an African American can effectively and proudly associate with the Christian faith.

Relational evangelism is a method of sharing one's faith that focuses on building meaningful relationships. In the context of the Black Church, it means connecting deeply with other people to share the message of hope and love. This approach has been significant throughout the Black Church's history, especially in communities that have faced difficulties. The Black Church has always been more than a place for worship; it has been a base for support, resistance, and empowerment.

Historically, the Black Church played a crucial role in the fight against oppression. During slavery, when many Black people were denied basic human rights, the church became a safe haven. It offered emotional and spiritual support, helping individuals find comfort in faith. Leaders like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth

found strength in biblical teachings and used them to inspire change. After the civil rights movement, the Black Church continued to serve as a beacon of hope, guiding communities toward justice. These struggles and triumphs have laid the foundations of how faith can foster connection and resilience.

Today, relational evangelism remains vital to Black men seeking to witness to the youngest generation. As they share their experiences and stories, they create ties built on confidence and understanding. The values learned from the past—such as unity, love, and law—enable Black men to involve younger Black men in significant dialogues. They become mentors, showing that faith can support them through the challenges they face in society.

In embracing the history of relational evangelism, Black men today can lead by example. They understand the unique struggles of their communities and use this knowledge to achieve. The Black Church taught them the importance of the community, encouraging them to rise. This transforming connection not only strengthens one's faith but also promotes a sense of responsibility to guide the next generation. When Blacks witness to younger men, they are not only sharing a message of faith but also conveying a legacy of resilience and hope.

In a world full of distractions and challenges, relational evangelism rooted in the Black Church offers Black men a powerful tool. This enables them to help younger Black men find their voice and purpose, reminding them that their identity and faith can lead to personal growth and collective force. Through these relationships, Black men can navigate contemporary society, demonstrating that they are united in faith and brotherhood. This deeply rooted practice honors its inheritance as it meets the needs of its

communities today. Reflecting on the role of Black men in mentoring younger generations, I see the power of relational evangelism. This approach focuses on building significant relationships within the Black community. For many Black men, the church has always been a place of guidance, support, and strength. It provides a safe space where they can share their experiences and feelings. When older Black men reach out to younger men, they forge connections that extend beyond preaching. They become mentors, friends, and models. This mentally strengthens the community, empowering the younger generation to navigate life's challenges.

Relational evangelism is not just sharing the gospel; it is also being there for one another. Many Black men get involved with young people through orientation programs, sports, and community events. These interactions have already had a significant impact. For example, some orientation programs in the churches are concentrated on education, work readiness, and personal development. When young Black people see older figures who faced similar struggles and succeeded, it fills them with hope. They see that their dreams are possible. I heard from young people who, because of a mentor's support, changed their lives. They gain confidence and a sense of purpose, and many of them later repay others.

The importance of authenticity, connection, and cultural relevance cannot be exaggerated in today's evangelism efforts. Black young people want to see reality. They appreciate it when older men share their stories, including their failures and successes. This honesty creates confidence and shows that everyone is human. In addition, having conversations about shared culture and experiences underlie these orientation relationships. He resonates deeply and makes the message more relatable.

For example, I attended church meetings, where older Black men shared their testimonies about overcoming adversity. At these times, you may feel that the connection gets stronger. Younger men hear closely, often agreeing, as they recognize similar challenges in their own lives. They see faith and resilience in these stories. This connection is key. It transforms evangelism from mere conversations into life-changing experiences.

Black young people are looking for examples of resilience and hope. They need mentors who not only speak God's Word but also show how it applies to the real world. When older Black men promote supportive, guiding, and understanding environments, they enable young people to explore their own identities and speak with confidence. The history of the Black Church is rich in leaders who fought for justice, love, and community. Relational evangelism honors this tradition, continuing to elevate and witness to the young Black people of today, ensuring that they feel seen, heard, and inspired to make their mark in the world.

I hope to share this knowledge with older African males in the Greater Fellowship Church, enabling them to evangelize the males more effectively in the surrounding community that we serve. Through history lessons and scriptural teaching, I hope to provide them with a background and foundation that will enable them to answer questions that often arise as we attempt to witness in our community.

I hope to find other programs and ministries that have succeeded in similar contexts and apply them to my context at Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church. This program aims to develop an evangelism method that is consistent with the Bible and

relevant to the modern context in which I serve. The goal is to engage and grow the congregation through a creative leadership model.

Conclusion

The Greater Fellowship Church is still relatively young compared to some of the more historic churches in Washington, D.C. With less than forty years in existence, there remains a significant opportunity to contribute to the already strong legacy and tradition of the church. The initial group of charter members, whom Pastor Pointer led, established an ethic of study and fellowship that enabled the church to grow steadily for several years. The commonly held belief, both inside and outside the church, that the Bible is true and God is real, allowed older evangelism methods to be effective, as there was almost always a common starting point with those they witnessed to. As time has progressed and the information age, facilitated by the internet, has arrived, more questions have arisen as people attempt to evangelize. Some do not believe in God. Some believe in God but doubt the truth of the Bible. Others think the Bible might be true but feel it does not apply to their context or situation. People are more willing to express these doubts, as generations of African Americans have shied away from attending church. Their children and grandchildren no longer view church as a priority, but consider it just one option among many, not at the top of their list.

An important factor in this decline is the evolution of the cultural landscape. Young Black men grow up in a world that values different forms of communication. Many prefer digital platforms and social media over in-person interactions. They are often more connected to their peers online and are seeking authentic connections through

these channels. This change in communication means that traditional methods may feel overwhelmed and less relevant to their experiences.

Social dynamics also play an important role. Young Black men face unique challenges, including systemic racism, economic difficulties, and community violence. These problems have an impact on how they see spirituality and religion. Many are seeking spaces where their challenges are acknowledged, and traditional evangelization may not effectively address these concerns. They are looking for a faith that addresses their realities and offers hope, not just dogma.

Consequently, alternative approaches to emerging evangelization resonate more effectively with this demographic. Many churches and ministries are now focusing on community commitment, social justice, and practical support. They address the issues that matter most to young Black men, including education, job opportunities, and mental health. This shift towards a more holistic approach can foster a deeper connection and inspire faith in a more meaningful way.

There is a need to revamp our evangelism methods to directly address the concerns of our community, connecting them back to the Bible and the sacred texts we cherish. It is essential to develop leaders who understand not only the history of the Bible but also the history of African Americans and Christianity in the United States, as well as the history of Africans and Christianity around the world. As this knowledge is shared, those we reach out to will become more receptive to Christianity as a viable faith option and Greater Fellowship as an opportunity for community. My passions, gifts, and skills align with this mission. I am a preacher and teacher, and I fulfill the roles of husband,

father, and son. Throughout my life, I have had male African American mentors, both spiritual and secular, who have guided me in a positive direction.

I want to be part of a context where African American males of the Christian faith are once again seen as strong mentors, not just in the church, but in the broader community. Helping them establish credibility through knowledge of African American history as it relates to Christianity will bridge the information gap and build strong relationships as we attempt to evangelize. This research project will develop a program to train African American males in the church to minister to those outside it, allowing them to see and identify with the Christian faith as Black men in the United States. Although we live in an internet and streaming age, I believe the most effective way to evangelize is through one-on-one communication in person as we go about our normal lives in the community. Additionally, outreach programs like our Food Bank can offer numerous opportunities to engage the community with the lessons learned from this project.

To initiate this project, I intend to survey African American males who are currently members of the Greater Fellowship Church to gauge their knowledge and willingness to learn about the history of Christianity in the African American community. We will then seek to develop a plan for effectively training these men to share the gospel with their peer group, who are not yet members of our faith community.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Acts 20:7-12 serves as a rich narrative that encapsulates the central themes of community worship and resurrection within the New Testament, illustrating the dynamics of the Christian church. The passage recounts an event in Troas where the apostles, especially Paul, gather on the first day of the week to break bread, a practice that highlights the communal nature of early Christian worship and underscores the significance of the day of the Lord as a focal point for the community. This gathering serves not only to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ but also to foster a sense of collective identity among believers. This community assembly highlights the transformative impact of worship on the lives of the first disciples and anticipates the enduring significance of this practice in contemporary Christian congregations.¹

Central to the narrative is the incident involving Eutychus, a young man who falls asleep during Paul's lengthy speech and ultimately falls from a third-floor window, resulting in his death. The act of resurrection that follows, performed by Paul, who descends and embraces the lifeless Eutychus to restore him to life, carries profound theological implications. This reason for resurrection highlights the power inherent in the Christian message and establishes a direct continuity between the ministry of Jesus and

¹ Mae Elise Cannon and Andrea Smith, *Evangelical Theologies of Liberation and Justice* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2019), 49.

that of his Apostles. The resurrection of Eutychus serves not only as a miraculous sign but also reflects the early church's belief in the transformative power of Christ, which extends beyond mere physical existence to encompass spiritual renewal. Such themes echo throughout the New Testament and resonate deeply in the understanding of salvation and hope for believers.

Additionally, Paul's portrayal as a diligent and dedicated preacher fits within a larger narrative of perseverance and commitment to cultural and physical challenges. As Paul continues to speak until midnight, the scene highlights the urgency of the Gospel message and the early church's dedication to its proclamation, revealing the tension between worldly fatigue and spiritual fervor. The congregation's ability to overcome the challenges posed by Eutychus's disappearance further illustrates the underlying theological themes of hope, even amid moments of despair, which are integral to the collective identity of early Christians.

The implications of this passage go beyond their immediate narrative, calling contemporary believers to examine their community worship practices and the meaning of resurrection in modern ecclesial life. The emphasis on the collective meeting, the celebration of the resurrection, and the challenges faced in the community present a structure for understanding the nature of the Church today. By focusing on these elements, acts of worship become not only ritualistic observances but expressions of hope, resilience, and divine encounter that resonate with the struggles faced by marginalized groups in contemporary society.

In the context of Black Liberation Theology, Acts 20:7-12 can be interpreted within the broader tapestry of the struggle for justice and equality. The resurrection

depicted in this narrative transcends physical barriers, symbolizing a liberation that reflects the experiences and hopes of oppressed communities. This theological perspective compels believers to recognize the empowerment of marginalized individuals as essential to the Church's mission. Such ideas challenge the contemporary church to actively engage in the transformative work of liberation, resonating with themes of resurrection, community identity, and the profound implications of the message of evangelism. The passage in Acts 20:7-12 offers a rich narrative that invites exegetical exploration within its historical and cultural contexts. This writing recounts an incident during Paul's visit to Troas, where the Christian community gathered on the first day of the week to break bread and listen to Paul preach until midnight. The text not only reflects common cult practices but also embodies significant theological and social elements that detail the nature of Christian identity.

The setting of Troas, a port city in the Roman province of Asia, serves as a backdrop for this assembly. This city, with its different demographics that include Gentiles, Jews, and various cultural interactions, represents a microcosm of Christian communities grappling with identity amidst external pressures. The reference to the “first day of the week” (Acts 20:7) signifies a crucial development in Christian practice—the transition from the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday to Sunday, reflecting the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This shift not only marks the emerging distinction of the Christian faith but also symbolizes a reorientation of identity as a community set apart in the light of the hope of resurrection.

The phrase “break the bread” carries substantial theological weight and reflects eucharistic practices. The Greek term used here, “Klao,” which denotes the act of

breaking bread, goes beyond mere physical sustenance, embodying community togetherness and the collective memory of Jesus' Last Supper.² This action signifies a ritual that is both celebratory and sacrificial, fostering a sense of belonging and identity among community members. It converges around the figure of Christ and acts as a catalyst for unity amid cultural diversity. Thus, the act of breaking bread serves not only as a ritual re-enactment but also as a profound affirmation of shared faith and commitment to the teachings of Christ.

In the narrative that follows, Paul's prolonged preaching until midnight introduces a dynamic element of community commitment. The Greek word "Paraklēsis," which translates to "soliciting" or "to comfort," emphasizes the dual role of preaching: to provide guidance and promote resilience within the community of faith.³ Paul's preaching practice reflects more than simple theological education; it serves as an act of collective empowerment aimed at strengthening the identity of believers. The narrative underscores the importance of sustained commitment to the scriptures, emphasizing teaching and exhortation as vital tools in fostering a robust community of faith.

The tragic accident of Eutychus, who falls from a window while trying to listen to Paolo's lengthy sermon, introduces significant social and theological themes. The fall of Eutychus and the subsequent resurrection by Paul not only signify a miraculous event but also resonate with themes of vulnerability and restoration inherent in the life of the Christian community. In a broader context, this event highlights the realities of human

² Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 181.

³ D. K. Mckim, "Exhort," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans. 1979–1988), 221.

limitation and the urgent need for community support, underscoring the transformative power of the Gospel in the lives of believers, particularly during times of despair.

Therefore, the elements of worship described in Acts 20:7-12—a gathering to break bread and preaching—serve not only as training practices for the Christian community but also present central issues of identity, resilience, and restoration. These practices reflect a theological understanding that is deeply intertwined with the fabric of community existence, highlighting a faith that is both personal and collective. Consequently, the narrative establishes critical foundations for exploring the implications of these elements for contemporary evangelization, particularly through the lens of the Theology of Black Liberation, where the common and solidarity nature of faith holds significant relevance.

The narrative of Acts 20:7-12 presents the miraculous resurrection of Eutychus, a young man who fell from a third-floor window due to sleepiness during Paul's lengthy speech and is subsequently raised from the dead. This event reflects the theological constructs of early Christianity regarding death and resurrection, serving as evidence of the faithful's expectation of eternal life. The act of resurrection, particularly in the context of early Christian thought, symbolizes not just a return from physical death but also affirms the transformative power of Christ's resurrection, as discussed in previous references to resurrection throughout the New Testament.⁴

In analyzing the resurrection of Eutychus within the context of biblical miracles, it is essential to recognize that these events are fundamentally grounded in the belief that the God who raises the dead is actively engaged in human affairs. The miracles serve

⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 2154-2156.

both as signs of the authenticity of the apostles' ministerial work and as manifestations of the kingdom of God breaking into a fractured world. The Christian community, besieged and often persecuted, finds profound encouragement in these miracles: the narrative of the resurrection strengthens the certainty of hope amid despair.

Eutychus' resurrection is much more than a single event; it symbolizes collective hope. In the first Christian communities, the act of raising someone from the dead was full of eschatological meaning. Believers found comfort and challenges in these narratives, indicating a reality that transcended physical death and suffering. This reality reflects the very resurrection of Jesus, a central theme of the Christian faith that emphasizes victory over death and the promise of new life.⁵

The narrative also serves to articulate the contemporary understanding of hope within evangelical circles, particularly through the lens of liberation theology. The concept of liberation emphasizes themes of freedom from oppression, both spiritual and socio-political. In this regard, the resurrection acts as a powerful symbol of hope against despair, asserting that death—both literal and metaphorical—does not hold the highest authority over the lives of marginalized and oppressed individuals. Evangelical communities often leverage the promise of the resurrection to inspire and energize, encouraging a shift from resignation to active commitment in the world.⁶ This can lead to a reimagining of evangelization that includes a commitment to justice and liberation, informed by the understanding that those who suffer possess intrinsic dignity and value, reflecting their creation in the image of God.

⁵ Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 2154-2156.

⁶ Bruce Fields, *Introducing Black Theology: Three Crucial Questions for the Evangelical Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 58.

Additionally, the miracle signifies not only a declaration of individual hope but also serves as a model for the Church's mission in the world. The liberationist perspective emphasizes that the act of resurrecting Eutychus encourages the Church to engage in acts of restoration and revitalization within marginalized communities. It promotes a dynamic in which believers are called not just to proclaim the resurrection but to manifest the transformative power of this belief in concrete ways, confronting suffering and oppression head-on. Thus, Eutychus's resurrection reverberates through the centuries, inspiring contemporary evangelization to tackle social injustices and disseminate the liberating message of the Gospel in a manner akin to the embodied hope of the resurrection. The adoption of Acts 20:7-12 offers a rich text for theological exploration, unveiling contrasting interpretations rooted in both traditional and progressive frameworks.

Traditionally, this passage has been understood in terms of miraculous events and the establishment of community worship within the primitive Christian Church. What emerges is the significance of common gatherings, reflecting the early church's response to the resurrection of Christ and leveraging the power of ritual and shared meals to strengthen faith and identity. This interpretation emphasizes the supernatural elements of the story, such as Eutychus's resurrection, situating it within the context of God's authority over life and death.⁷

Conversely, progressive interpretations of this passage tend to focus on the social dynamics at stake within the community. The account of Eutychus's death and subsequent resurrection can serve as a metaphor for community renewal and resilience in

⁷ John B. Polhill, *Acts, The New American Commentary*, vol. 26 (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1992), 418-420.

the face of despair. From this perspective, the passage highlights the community's responsibility to support one another, particularly during times of tragedy, emphasizing the interdependence of the Church.⁸

During the exploration of the Theology of Black Liberation, an alternative lens emerges, which imbues this text with profound socio-political implications. McCaulley emphasizes the significance of understanding the plight of marginalized communities and interprets the resurrection of Eutychus as a symbol of hope and resilience in the face of oppression.⁹ Faced with systemic injustices, Paul's miraculous act of resuscitating Eutychus from the dead signifies a divine intervention that speaks to the struggles faced by individuals within the oppressed communities. This interpretation aligns with the central principle of BLT, which is that the Christian faith provides resources not only for spiritual survival but also for tangible social change.

In addition, there is a critical perspective emphasizing the significance of community solidarity and mutual empowerment, overseeing the renewal of Eutychus as a reminder of the strength found in collective resilience.¹⁰ Within the context of systemic oppression, the common gathering in acts can be seen as a direct challenge to the oppressive structures faced by marginalized groups. Consequently, this passage serves not only as a tale of individual salvation but as a radical declaration of the collective capacity of the community to foster hope amid despair. In this context, Paul's actions

⁸ Williams J. Wainwright, *Religion and Morality* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2005), 124-141.

⁹ Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 134.

¹⁰ Andrea Smith, *Unreconciled: From Racial Reconciliation to Racial Justice in Christian Evangelism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 285.

exemplify liberative Christian praxis, highlighting a shift from individual salvation to community liberation.

The dialogue between traditional interpretations and progressive ideas, particularly those emerging from the Theology of Black Liberation, underscores the multifaceted nature of Acts 20:7-12. Traditional views often emphasize the miracle itself, while progressive perspectives increasingly examine the implications of these miracles for addressing contemporary societal issues. This shift is essential for understanding the significance of the passage in modern evangelical contexts. Engaging with principles of resilience and community empowerment aligns not only with early Christian practices but also encourages contemporary congregations to embrace evangelical strategies relevant to marginalized populations.

By emphasizing inclusiveness, community responsibility, and the transformative power of faith, evangelization can become a multidimensional effort that addresses societal inequalities in a manner reflecting the community ethics demonstrated in Acts 20:7-12. The significance of community adoration as a source of empowerment and resilience in the traditions of the Black Church is rooted in the collective experiences of marginalized communities. In Acts 20:7-12, the gathering of the first Christians in Troas serves not only as a moment of theological education but also as a communal act that embodies the need for shared experiences. This passage, where believers gather to break bread and listen to Paul preach, underscores the importance of community in shaping faith, particularly in contexts that reflect the struggles and resilience found in Black history.¹¹

¹¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 300-310.

The academic analysis illustrates that common cult events are fundamental moments that shape the identity and purpose of marginalized groups.¹² The act of gathering to worship is not merely a ritualistic exercise, but a reaffirmation of faith and unity among those who have often found themselves on the periphery of social acceptance. In this way, these meetings function as a form of resistance against unemployment, enabling collective memory and shared narratives to bolster both individual and communal resilience.

The Theology of Black Liberation, particularly as articulated by figures like James Cone, emphasizes the significant role of community within spirituality. Cone argues that the liberation of the oppressed must take place within a framework that prioritizes everyday experiences.¹³ This theology suggests that unwanted impotence and law find strength through community, fostering a collective identity that affirms their dignity amid systemic injustice. In Acts 20:7-12, the communal gathering symbolizes not only a commitment to one another but also serves as a catalyst for empowerment that surpasses individual existence.

Through the shared act of worship, highlighted by the breaking of bread and the excitement of collective expectations, communities discover a source of spiritual nourishment that bolsters their perseverance. The communal nature of the event creates a space where members affirm their collective identity as they navigate their struggles, fostering a holistic approach to faith that embraces social reality. The moment of

¹² Emerson B. Powery and Rodney S. Sadler, Jr., *The Genesis of Liberation: Biblical Interpretation in the Antebellum Narratives of the Enslaved* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 170.

¹³ Antipas L. Harris, "Black Pentecostal Hermeneutics?: James H. Cone's Theological Sources and Black Pentecostalism." *Pneuma* 41, no. 2 (2019): 193-217.

resurrection experienced by Eutychus—who, despite a fall into despair, is revived through shared action—metaphorically encapsulates the struggle for survival and hope within the Black church tradition.

In addition, the common culturecolle acts as an incarnation of collective memory, intertwining the historical traumas faced by Black communities with the current expressions of faith.¹⁴ This collective memory serves not only as a source of identity formation but also as a tank from which Empowerment is designed. Through storytelling, shared hymns, and liturgical structures, marginalized groups recount their journeys and revisit past experiences of suffering within a framework of hope and liberation.

Therefore, Acts 20:7-12 exemplifies the importance of shared moments in strengthening faith through a common lens. Theological insights gained from the Theology of Black Liberation enhance this understanding by asserting that it is through sharing these experiences and forging common ties that faith is cultivated and remains resilient in the face of adversity. The ongoing academic discourse reveals that the implications of these communal cult events extend into contemporary evangelization, suggesting a model that prioritizes shared experiences and narratives as profoundly influential in transforming the spiritual landscapes of marginalized groups. The examination of Acts 20:7-12 has largely been undertaken through traditional exegetical lenses, with particular emphasis on Pauline Theology, the meaning of communal worship, and the miraculous event of Eutychus's resurrection. However, these classical interpretations often overlook the collective experiences and insights of marginalized groups, particularly African Americans, thus leaving a significant portion of the

¹⁴ Powery, and Sadler Jr., *The Genesis of Liberation*, 161.

interpretive process incomplete. These omissions limit the broader application of the text and diminish the richness of its cultural and theological implications.

A limitation of classic theological interpretations is their tendency to approach biblical texts from a Eurocentric perspective, which prioritizes Western ideologies over the experiences of diverse communities. This perspective resulted in a lack of engagement with the socio-political realities faced by African American communities, a group that has historically endured systemic oppression and cultural displacement. In the case of Acts 20:7-12, neglecting African American experiences may lead to an interpretation that recognizes the miraculous but overlooks the complexities of struggle and resilience depicted in the narratives of community life, healing, and hope. The theological discourse should prioritize inclusion to foster a more comprehensive understanding of the biblical texts that resonate with the realities of all believers.

Moreover, the limited engagement with contextual stories in classical theological approaches often overlooks the hermeneutics of liberation. The focus on the fall of Eutychus and his subsequent resurrection captivates traditional interpretations, yet it neglects the implications of community vulnerability, the role of community support, and the broader messages of hope that can arise from tragic situations. A liberationist interpretation reveals the interconnectedness of the faithful, emphasizing that Eutychus' experience symbolizes the common struggles faced by marginalized communities. In this regard, the text transcends a mere account of miraculous healing; it evolves into a

narrative that highlights the importance of mutual assistance, solidarity, and restoration within communities.¹⁵

Furthermore, classic theological interpretations often prioritize individual salvation narratives while neglecting the systemic injustices that hinder collective prosperity. In contrast, the Theology of Black Liberation emphasizes understanding salvation as a collective endeavor that engages with socio-political realities. This perspective challenges readers to confront the historical oppression and ongoing struggles faced by Black communities and encourages a reevaluation of the transformative power of faith in community contexts. This approach requires deconstructing traditional concepts of individualistic salvation, proposing instead a perspective that prioritizes community and liberation as central elements of faith practice.

The need for a more inclusive theological discourse becomes evident when considering the implications for contemporary evangelization. Classic theological interpretations often fall short of addressing the existential crises that persist within marginalized communities, limiting their relevance in a rapidly diversifying society. To reach and effectively engage African American communities, contemporary evangelization must be informed by an understanding of the various historical and cultural landscapes from which people emerge. This involves using theological perspectives that resonate with issues of identity, trauma, and resilience within

¹⁵ Emerson B. Powery, "African American Criticism," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 327.

the community, thus creating pathways that invite marginalized voices into the evangelical conversation.¹⁶

Consequently, integrating the insights from the Theology of Black Liberation into the interpretation of Acts 20:7-12 not only expands the theological discourse but also enhances the relevance of biblical teachings in contemporary contexts. In this way, the richness of the biblical text is revealed in new dimensions, highlighting the urgent need for justice, equality, and hope. Furthermore, incorporating the ideas of Feminist Theology provides a nuanced reading of Acts 20:7-12, particularly in understanding the social and cultural dynamics surrounding the resurrection of Eutychus. Feminist Theology, emerging from the experiences and perspectives of Black women, emphasizes the interconnection of race, gender, and social justice as integral components of theological discourse.¹⁷ This critical approach challenges traditional interpretations, which often overlook the lived realities of marginalized groups, thereby enriching the exegesis of biblical texts.

In the account of Acts 20:7-12, the resurrection of Eutychus, who falls from a window during Paul's prolonged preaching, resonates with the broader themes of struggle and survival. Eutychus' experience can be metaphorically linked to the difficulties faced by Black women within the Church. Resurrection imagery carries significant weight, offering a poignant reminder of resilience in the face of systemic oppression. The act of falling and being restored parallels the challenges that many Black women

¹⁶ Powery, "African American Criticism," 327.

¹⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (London, UK: Routledge, 2008), xi.

encounter, particularly in religious contexts that often prioritize male voices and marginalize female experiences.¹⁸

Feminist theologians assert that the purpose of resurrection involves not only divine intervention but also a call for agency among marginalized communities, including women within the Church.¹⁹ The renewal of Eutychus can be seen as a symbol of hope—indicating that, like Eutychus, marginalized individuals can experience renewal and restoration despite their social circumstances. This story encourages congregations to rethink the spaces they create, ensuring they embrace the richness of diverse voices and experiences, particularly those of women who have consistently navigated the dual challenges of race and gender.

In addition, the common aspect of Eutychus' resurrection underscores a collective responsibility towards one another, reflecting feminist ideals that emphasize community and mutual support. In Acts 20:12, the community gathered engages in a collective affirmation of Eutychus's newfound life, which can be considered a metaphorical resurrection not only for him but also for all within the community, testifying to his transformation. This underlines a feminist accent on community solidarity, where the healing of one indicates the development of all.

By incorporating feminist interpretations alongside traditional theological evaluations, the passage gains a deeper layer of meaning. Eutychus' resurrection is not just an event; it symbolizes the hope that, despite despair, there is a path of renewal

¹⁸ F. Scott Spencer, "Feminist Criticism," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 296.

¹⁹ Mlamli Diko, "Exploring Women's Challenges and Victories in the New Testament Through Liberation Theology," *Theologia Viatorum* 48, no. 1 (2024): 230.

rooted in the community's collective faith and commitment to justice. This redesigned account encourages contemporary practices within Church communities that defend inclusiveness and racial justice.

The adoption of Feminist Theology in Acts 20:7-12 leads to theological commitments that favor the lived experiences of women of color, urging a re-evaluation of interpretive frameworks that have historically supported patriarchal structures. The implications extend to broader theological conversations, promoting discussions on the role of women in leadership, the necessity for diverse theological voices, and the importance of creating spaces where all the faithful can engage with the scriptures on equal footing. This integration of feminist ideas allows the story of Eutychus to symbolize hope amidst struggle, reflecting the resilience inherent in the experiences of Black women and their contributions to the Church.²⁰

Acts 20:7-12 narrates a significant moment in early Christian worship, where Paul preaches at a meeting in Troas, culminating in the miraculous resurrection of a young man named Eutychus. This event not only demonstrates the power of divine intervention but also serves as a rich source for various theological interpretations. A comparative analysis of Black Liberation Theology's perspective on this passage alongside other liberation theologies, particularly Latin American liberation theology and Feminist Theology, reveals distinctive ideas, with a particular emphasis on the expression of Black Pentecostal hermeneutics.²¹

²⁰ Spencer, "Feminist Criticism," 296.

²¹ Harris, "Black Pentecostal Hermeneutics?," 193-217.

The Theology of Black Liberation, which arises from the historical oppression of African Americans in the United States, emphasizes issues of freedom, struggle, and divine solidarity with the marginalized and oppressed. When interpreting Acts 20:7-12, Black Liberation theologians can highlight the community aspect of worship represented in this passage, underscoring the importance of collective identity and responsibility within the Christian community. The act of gathering for worship can be viewed as a radical counter-narrative against the historical individualism that often characterizes mainstream theological interpretations. For example, when Eutychus falls and subsequently dies, the community's response to come together reflects resilience within the tradition of the African American Church, where collective prayer and support are deemed essential for overcoming adversity.²²

In contrast, Latin American Liberation Theology, rooted in Marxist theory and the context of oppression in Latin America, could focus on the socio-economic dimensions of the passage. Academics such as Gustavo Gutiérrez and Leonardo Boff might interpret the text through the lens of the "preferential option for the poor," examining how the trajectory of Paul's ministry aligns with a socio-political agenda that challenges systemic injustices.^{23, 24} Eutychus's resurrection could symbolize not only spiritual renewal but also a broader call for socio-economic revival, advocating for the rights of impoverished and marginalized communities. Although both Black and Latin American Liberation

²² Sharon Rusten and E. Michael, *The Complete Book of When and Where in the Bible and Throughout History* (Wheaton, IL: Michael E. Rusten, 2005).

²³ Tremper Longman III, *How to Read Exodus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009).

²⁴ S. Escobar, "Gutiérrez, Gustavo (b. 1928)," in *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic*, eds. Martin Davie, Tim Grass, Stephen R. Holmes, John McDowell, and T. A. Noble, Second Edition (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2016), 386.

Theologies recognize the importance of community participation, the latter primarily emphasizes socioeconomic liberation.

Feminist Theology offers another lens through which the text can be examined, often questioning the roles and voices present in biblical narratives. For instance, while Acts 20:7-12 primarily focuses on male figures, feminist critiques encourage an exploration of marginalized voices, prompting us to consider what it means for the Church to rediscover and embody the experiences of women within the narrative. Although feminist interpretations might not emphasize community worship significantly, they challenge the patriarchal structures observable in the text and advocate for an inclusive theology that recognizes the experiences and contributions of women to the community of faith.

Within this comparative framework, Black Pentecostal hermeneutics emerges as a significant approach that synthesizes elements of Black Liberation Theology and charismatic movements prevalent in the African American evangelical tradition. This hermeneutical position is largely grounded in the community's experiences, emphasizing the immediacy of God's power, as demonstrated in the miraculous event of Eutychus' resurrection.²⁵ The Pentecostal perspective, infused with a profound sense of expectation for divine action during community worship, aligns with the focus of Black Liberation Theology on hope and transformation, envisioning not only spiritual rebirth but also socio-political emancipation. This hermeneutical viewpoint intensifies the narrative's message that resurrection, whether spiritual or social, can be achieved through collective faith and community support.

²⁵ Harris, "Black Pentecostal Hermeneutics?," 193-217.

In summary, while Black Liberation Theology offers unique insights on Acts 20:7-12 through its emphasis on community identity and resilience, other liberation theologies provide contrasting interpretations that underscore social justice, economic liberation, and feminist critiques. The contributions of Black Pentecostal hermeneutics further enrich this discourse, illustrating how various theological perspectives enhance the understanding of scripture and their implications for contemporary faith communities. The nuanced interaction between these different theological orientations encourages a deeper exploration of how Acts 20:7-12 continues to resonate within today's struggles for liberation and empowerment.

The implications of theological insights derived from Acts 20:7-12, in conjunction with the ideas of Black Liberation Theology, have profound implications for contemporary evangelism, particularly in racially diverse contexts. This passage depicts a community gathering characterized by both physical and spiritual reliance on the act of assembling. The interaction between Paul and the young Eutychus presents a different understanding of Christian communion, where physical and spiritual vitality intertwine. This narrative underscores the importance of congregational life that adheres to the principles of inclusion and accessibility, particularly in communities that have historically faced marginalization.

Black Liberation Theology emphasizes the need for faith as a liberating force, challenging oppressive structures that alienate marginalized and privileged groups. This theological perspective can enhance contemporary evangelism by reformulating outreach efforts to prioritize social justice and community empowerment, aligning with the apostolic model seen in Acts Chapter Twenty. The act of lifting Eutychus can be viewed

as representative of a broader mission to revive those who have been diminished or oppressed by society. In contemporary practice, evangelism that incorporates this theological insight should engage with the spiritual and socioeconomic conditions of individuals, advocating for systemic changes alongside the proclamation of the gospel.

In addition, the community nature of the meeting in Acts, along with the subsequent miracle, underscores the importance of creating spaces where diverse voices are heard and communities can share their concerns. Black Liberation Theology's insistence on the importance of identity and community solidarity suggests that evangelistic efforts must cultivate environments that enable individuals to narrate their own stories within the greatest narrative of faith. This approach resonates particularly in racially diverse contexts, where historical experiences of oppression and resilience inform current spiritual journeys.

Additionally, the urgency of the church's mission, exemplified by the night meeting and Paul's extensive preaching, demands a renewed approach to evangelism. Today's evangelism often prioritizes convenience and comfort, but the passage proposes a model that calls for a radical commitment to both the message and the community. Considering Black Liberation Theology, this urgency must transform into proactive engagement with social justice issues, ensuring that evangelism remains connected to the lived realities of those in the community. Evangelistic outreach should encompass critical dialogue and action on issues such as racial inequality, economic disparity, and systemic injustice, making the gospel relevant and transformative in the lives of those lacking privileges.

In addition, Eutychus's resurrection manifests a practical theology that embraces hope and restoration. For modern evangelists, this can deepen their understanding of how to promote hope in communities that feel the weight of despair. Emphasizing the resurrection narrative can inspire dissemination efforts that wave transformation to individuals and their environments. Evangelism under the lens of Black Liberation Theology adopts a theology of hope, extending the request for restoration beyond personal salvation to a community awakening.

In short, the ideas of Acts 20:7-12 intertwined with Black Liberation Theology defend an evangelistic model that is deeply contextual, socially engaged, and committed to marginalized voices. These elements provide a framework for contemporary evangelistic practices that are theologically sound and practically relevant to advancing the kingdom of God, especially in racially diverse settings. An examination of Acts 20:7-12 through the lens of exegesis reveals significant concepts relevant to various theological frameworks, particularly when viewed through the prism of Black Liberation Theology. This pericope, which recounts Paul's resurrection of Eutychus, offers profound theological insights that touch on vital themes of suffering, community, and transformation. The act of revival is not simply a miraculous event; it serves as a metaphor for liberation, suggesting that the community's collective effort can lead to restorative life in times of despair.

Black Liberation Theology emphasizes the need to interpret biblical texts in ways that resonate with the lived experiences of marginalized communities. By placing Eutychus—a man who has fallen into a state of death—at the forefront, this passage becomes particularly moving for communities burdened by systemic oppression and

deprivation. The narrative illustrates that life reemerges in spaces where love, community, and faith are actively fostered. Paul's role in this communal context exemplifies a collective approach to ministry that encourages transformation, highlighting the community's responsibility for those who are suffering.

Theological insights derived from this exegesis inform contemporary evangelistic strategies by advocating for the inclusion of diverse perspectives that recognize and affirm the various experiences of all individuals, especially those who have been historically marginalized. He emphasizes the importance of not only preaching resurrection in a spiritual sense but also facilitating physical and social restoration, which resonates with the commitment of Black Liberation Theology to take practical action for justice.

As such, this approach to Acts 20:7-12 transcends traditional evangelistic methods that typically prioritize individual salvation. Instead, it requires a reorientation of collective practices informed by the community's needs. Recognition of community resurrection in the narrative postulates that evangelism must incorporate a transformative power impacting both individuals and communities, ensuring that the life-giving power demonstrated in Paul's actions is actively pursued in contemporary contexts. This is vital for promoting a holistic evangelistic model that advocates for the integration of faith and social action, strongly resonating with the focus of Black Liberation Theology to address the socioeconomic and political realities affecting marginalized groups.

Moreover, the multiplicity of theological perspectives that link the principles of social justice inherent in Black Liberation Theology provides critical insight into how Acts 20:7-12 can be understood within a broader ecological context. It emphasizes the

interconnectivity of spiritual rebirth and sociocultural renewal, thereby defending a theology that highlights not only spiritual awakening but also tangible social change. This discourse highlights the central role of the Church as an activist entity in responding to the call for spiritual and sociopolitical liberation.

In essence, the findings obtained from this exegetical analysis of Acts 20:7-12 emphasize the need for inclusive theological structures that holistically address the complexities of human experience, reaffirming the impulse towards collective liberation. Moreover, these ideas challenge contemporary evangelists to develop methodologies and practices that reflect the community, healing, and transforming ethos in this text, advancing toward a more robust evangelistic mission that personifies the holistic love and justice of Christ. The implications are vast and require a reevaluation of how churches engage with their communities in the pursuit of life, hope, and liberation for all.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Nat Turner, born on October 2, 1800, in Southampton County, Virginia, emerged from a society marked by widespread racial oppression and systemic slavery that defined the Southern United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As the son of an enslaved mother and a transient enslaved father, Turner was raised in an environment that fostered a keen awareness of the social hierarchies imposed by plantation culture¹. His early years were shaped by the contradictions inherent in slavery. Despite facing the harsh realities of this condition, Turner was exposed to elements of literacy and religious fervor, which greatly influenced his subsequent actions. His teacher, Benjamin Turner, recognized Turner's exceptional intelligence and granted him a degree of freedom rarely afforded to enslaved people of that time, including educational opportunities through informal means and access to religious teachings.²

Turner's education coincided with a period of intense pro-slavery sentiment and the emergence of abolitionist thinking in the United States. The enslaved population of Virginia faced increasing restrictions, especially after the debates surrounding emancipation and the abolitionist movement in the northern states. These conflicting

¹ Patrick H. Breen, *The Land Shall be Deluged in Blood: A New History of the Nat Turner Revolt* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 17.

² David F. Allmendinger, *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County* (Baltimore, MD: JHU Press, 2014), 37.

social currents fed Turner's psychological and spiritual awakening. In particular, Turner was deeply influenced by deep religious convictions, claiming to have experienced divine visions and revelations that drove him towards the belief that he was chosen to lead his companions, enslaved individuals, in a revolt against his oppressors.³ This conviction not only provided a sense of purpose but also shaped its moral framework, framing the struggle for liberation as a spiritual duty and a practical necessity.

In the context of an America grappling with moral and political dilemmas surrounding slavery, Nat Turner found himself at the crossroads of an explosive social landscape. The rebellion of 1831, led by Turner, was not merely a reaction to personal grievances but rather a culmination of the collective anguish of enslaved people yearning for freedom against an oppressive establishment. The sociopolitical environment of the time, marked by a cacophony of voices competing for reform, set the stage for Turner's insurrection. The insurrection began on August 21, 1831. It continued for several days, culminating in a violent confrontation that resulted in approximately sixty dead White individuals and sparked brutal repression against the African American community from militias and local state authorities.⁴

The consequences of Turner's rebellion had radical implications, promulgating deep changes in both the legal and social fabric of the South. In an attempt to quell the fears lit by the rebellion, the southern states implemented even more harsh laws that regulated enslaved and free Black populations, effectively squeezing the control of White supremacy. On the contrary, Turner's actions caused a significant discourse both in the

³ Breen, *The Land Shall be Deluged in Blood*, 23-24.

⁴ Allmendinger, *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County*, 209.

North and South about the ethics and sustainability of slavery.⁵ His rebellion became a catalyst for abolitionist feelings intensified among the abolitionists of the North and led to a greater sense of urgency concerning the moral imperative of addressing the institution of slavery within the U.S. landscape.

Therefore, examining Nat Turner's life and actions provides a critical lens through which to understand the intersections of personal agency, collective struggle, and the socio-political ramifications of rebellion in the context of U.S. slavery. The motivations of Nat Turner to direct the rebellion of 1831 can be understood through a multifaceted lens that includes his religious beliefs, his personal experiences, and the wider aspirations of the enslaved community. Turner, born in 1800 in Southampton County, Virginia, was recognized for his exceptional intelligence and spiritual fervor from an early age. He developed a deep feeling of religious goals that would shape his vision of the world. Turner experienced a series of visions, some of which were interpreted as divine revelations, indicating that God chose him to direct his people in a fight against slavery of slavery.⁶ These visions not only cemented his role as a religious leader but also catalyzed a feeling of urgency among the slave individuals who shared his beliefs.

His personal experiences also played a central role in strengthening his determination. Turner witnessed the brutal realities of slavery, including the physical violence inflicted on his fellow enslaved individuals, as well as the psychological torment

⁵ Breen, *The Land Shall be Deluged in Blood*, 2.

⁶ Alexander Mazzaferro, "A Nat Turner in Every Family: Exemplarity and Exceptionality in the Print Circulation of Slave Revolt," *The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 10, no. 2 (2022): 267-303.

caused by the dehumanizing system of servitude. As an enslaved person himself, Turner was deeply aware of the collective despair and the yearning for freedom that permeated the lives of those around him. This acute awareness of suffering and the desire for liberation created a powerful motivating force that inspired him to act. Turner's empathy for his peers and his shared experience of oppression fostered a sense of community aspiration among the oppressed population.

Furthermore, Turner's interpretation of his prophetic visions aligns with the spiritual practices prevalent in many African American communities during this time. The influence of African religious traditions, blended with Christian teachings, has created a rich tapestry of beliefs that emphasizes resistance and resilience. His focus on justice in the pursuit of freedom through a violent uprising deeply resonated within the enslaved community, as many found comfort in the belief that they had a divine mandate to oppose their oppressors.⁷ This synergy of religious conviction and community suffering shaped the collective conscience of his disciples, making Turner's rebellion not just a personal endeavor but a communal uprising rooted in a shared quest for dignity and autonomy.

Turner's leadership during the rebellion was characterized by a profound understanding of the objective and the urgent aspiration for liberating action. The violent uprising he orchestrated, which led to the deaths of several White slavers and their families, embodied his vision in many ways. He exposed the vulnerabilities of the slavery system and challenged the prevailing narratives about the passivity of slaves. Turner's motivations were rooted in the spiritual and community aspirations that defined the lives

⁷ Charles Terry, "A Rebellious Education: Enslaved African Americans and the Fight for Literacy," (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, 2022).

of slaves, serving as a broader indictment of the institution of slavery and launching the basis of subsequent abolitionist movements. The slave rebellion of 1831, led by Nat Turner, an African American enslaved man, marks a pivotal moment in American history, especially regarding the social and racial dynamics of the South. The uprising occurred over several days, from August 21 to August 23, 1831, primarily in Southampton County, Virginia, a region known for its agrarian economy and predominant population of White slaveholding families.⁸

Turner, born into slavery in 1800, was profoundly influenced by a sense of divine mission and prophetic vision, shaping both his spiritual beliefs and the events surrounding the uprising. His youth, characterized by experiences of oppression and isolation, fostered a sense of leadership and strong conviction that would uplift those enslaved in his community. Throughout his life, he asserted that he received visions from God, which convinced him of his divinely appointed role to lead his people to freedom.⁹

The immediate prelude to rebellion can be considered in the context of increasing tensions surrounding the institution of slavery. The early 1830s marked a period of increased resistance and dissent against slavery because abolitionist feelings gained ground in the northern states. This growing climate of agitation undoubtedly influenced Turner's decision to act, but it also illustrates the dominant anxieties of slavers concerning potential uprisings.¹⁰

⁸ Christopher Tomlins, *In the Matter of Nat Turner: A Speculative History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 137.

⁹ Allmendinger, *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County*, 15.

¹⁰ Tomlins, *In the Matter of Nat Turner*, 138.

On the night of August 21st, driven by a deep conviction of his divine calling, Turner initiated the rebellion by assembling a small group of followers that grew as they moved from plantation to plantation. Their strategy largely centered on surprise and violence against slave owners and their families. The prominent figures of the rebellion included Turner himself, Gabriel, Hark, and several others who served as commanders in the effort, encouraging those enslaved to join them in the revolt.¹¹

Armed with axes and firearms, the rebels launched their assault against the slavers and their households without suspicion, causing the death of about sixty White people during the rebellion. The rebellion spread quickly in the region, while the enslaved individuals gathered under the charismatic leadership of Turner and the promise of liberation. The geographic context of the County of Southampton proved critical; its vast plantations and weekly defended slave districts facilitated the rapid growth of the insurrection, while the rebels successfully took control of several plantations before the intervention of the local militia.¹²

Despite its initial success, the insurrection was suppressed within a few days, facing violent resistance from local militias and the deployment of federal troops. The aftermath of the rebellion was marked by brutal reprisals against African Americans, both free and enslaved, as the alleged participants were hunted down, executed, or subjected to severe punishment. Estimates indicate that as many as 200 Black individuals were killed in the violence that followed the rebellion.¹³

¹¹ Allmendinger, *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County*, 96-97.

¹² Tomlins, *In the Matter of Nat Turner*, 105.

¹³ Allmendinger, *Nat Turner and the Rising in Southampton County*, 374.

In this context, the implications of the rebellion extended far beyond its immediate impact. He sparked general fear among slavers concerning the potential of similar uprisings, leading to more oppressive laws and measures aimed at controlling the populations reduced to slavery. In addition, the rebellion deeply influenced the abolitionist movement because Turner's actions became a rallying point for abolitionists, stressing the urgency for emancipation and the moral imperative to face the institution of national slavery.¹⁴

The legacy of Turner's rebellion endures as a poignant reflection of resistance against oppression, highlighting the struggles that have defined the history of slavery in America. The immediate sequelae of Nat Turner's rebellion in August 1831 was marked by a generalized and violent response of the White Southern Southerners, underlining the deeply entrenched fears that surround the insurrections of slaves and the threats perceived to their social order. Following the uprising, which resulted in the death of approximately sixty White individuals, panic swept the southern states. To reaffirm control, the White militias promulgated brutal reprisals against the enslaved population, noting not only those directly involved in the rebellion but also many who were innocent or only marginally involved. It is estimated that as many as 200 enslaved individuals were later murdered, executed in acts of vigilant justice, or collectively punished as a means to deter any future insurrection.¹⁵

This terror atmosphere had deep implications for the laws that governed enslaved persons. In response to the rebellion, state legislatures throughout the South quickly

¹⁴ Tomlins, *In the Matter of Nat Turner*, 32.

¹⁵ Adam Thomas, "The Many Deaths of Nat Turner: Contested Historical Memory Under Slavery and Segregation," *Journal of Southern History* 90 (2024): 5-44.

promulgated the toughest slave codes, with the aim of hardening control over the enslaved population and eliminating any possibility of future revolts. These new regulations reduced the already limited rights of enslaved persons, prohibiting them from meeting in groups, receiving education, or even speaking with each other without the supervision of a White individual.¹⁶ Such measures reflected a growing fear of the rebellion that dominated the South's mentality, with extreme and often violent responses.

The social panic resulting from Turner's rebellion extended beyond immediate suppressive actions and contributed to an ideological shift among White Southerners. The rebellion was not merely viewed as a local insurrection but as a portent of a potential widespread uprising that could transform the entire plantation economy. This instigated a stronger commitment to the institution of slavery and a notable rejection of abolitionist sentiments. In the years following the rebellion, Southern leaders aimed to bolster their defenses, both physically through armed patrols and legally by reinforcing slave codes, all of which led to a more rigid and oppressive system of slavery.¹⁷

The sequelae of the rebellion also sparked a wider debate within Southern society about the moral and economic foundations of slavery. While some defenders of slavery intensified their justifications, arguing that it was a necessary evil to maintain social order, others began to voice concerns about the violence and instability inherent in that system.¹⁸ This internal discord further amplified the voices against slavery in the South

¹⁶ Kenneth S. Greenberg, "Blood and Public Curiosity," *Reviews in American History* 44, no. 1 (2016): 110-117.

¹⁷ Adam Thomas, "The Many Deaths of Nat Turner," 5-44.

¹⁸ Kenneth S. Greenberg, "Blood and Public Curiosity," *Reviews in American History* 44, no. 1 (2016), 110-117.

and heightened the rhetoric supporting the “peculiar institution,” while escalating the tensions between American supporters and free abolitionists.

The repercussions of Nat Turner’s rebellion were multifaceted, strengthening an existing culture of fear and repression. The brutality exercised in the name of order and the resulting legislative measures not only tightened attitudes towards enslaved people but also led to a broader social bifurcation, in which the South solidified its resistance against the abolitionist movements of the North. As Turner and his followers became infamous figures instead of martyrs for freedom in the eyes of the South Society, the rebellion finally exemplified the lengths to which the owners would go to safeguard their system, shaping the trajectory of the resistance of slaves and abolitionist movements in the coming years. Nat Turner’s representation and the 1831 rebellion that he led occupy a complex space in American historical narratives, reflecting broader social attitudes towards race, resistance, and the institution of slavery. Initially framed as a violent insurrection, the rebellious historiography has evolved, leading to contrasting interpretations that encapsulate ideological divisions both during Turner’s time and in subsequent years. The first narratives, particularly after the rebellion, echoed the fears of slave owners and the broader White society, who sought to portray Turner as a brutal instigator of chaos. Virginia Governor John Floyd, for example, referred to Turner’s actions as “the most terrible calamity” to occur in the state, emphasizing the terror felt by plantation owners.¹⁹

From the antebellum period through the Civil War, Turner’s rebellion was often portrayed as a cautionary tale that reinforced White supremacy and justified the

¹⁹ Adam Thomas, “‘A Bargain With His Brother:’ Kinship in the US and Jamaican Emancipation Wars of 1831,” *Journal of Global Slavery* 6, no. 2 (2021): 218-247.

implementation of stricter slave codes. Narratives that condemned the rebellion were intertwined with depictions of brutality and chaos, framing the actions of the rebels as savage rather than a pursuit of freedom. This portrayal served to support the existing social order and characterize enslaved individuals as threats to stability, reinforcing the narrative of their inferiority and the need for tighter control. This representation effectively obscured the strategic elements of Turner's rebellion, which sought not only an immediate end to slavery but also the potential of a broader revolution to inspire and galvanize enslaved individuals throughout the South.

The twentieth century announced a shift in Nat Turner's portrayal within both popular and academic discussions. Scholars began re-evaluating the motives behind Turner's revolt, viewing it as a significant act of resistance against the oppressive institution of slavery. Various narratives depicted Turner as a prophetic figure, with his religious convictions igniting a desire for freedom. This perspective supports the idea that Turner's actions can be understood within the context of a larger religious enthusiasm among the enslaved, implying that rebellion was not merely a spontaneous act of violence but a calculated response to systemic oppression.²⁰ The romanticization of Turner as a martyr within the abolitionist movement gained momentum, especially in the works of writers like W.E.B. Du Bois and later historians, who depicted him as a symbol of hope for the oppressed.

This contested memory reveals how Turner's cultural perceptions evolved from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into the twenty-first century, where contemporary dialogues reflect ongoing struggles surrounding narratives of race and resistance. The

²⁰ Jean W. Cash, "Misguided, Fragmented, Disjointed Images," *Mississippi Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (2019): 117-145.

2016 film “The Birth of a Nation,” though controversial, served to resurrect and reformulate Turner’s story, igniting public discussions about historical narratives and the representation of Black resistance. Critics argue that such portrayals risk sensationalizing violence, thus perpetuating certain stereotypes, while supporters claim that they recover Turner’s legacy for the contemporary public seeking representations of Black heroism and resilience in the face of oppression.²¹

As the nation’s legacy around Nat Turner continues, it is evident that the implications of his actions extend beyond a singular historical event. They intersect with the dialogues in progress on race, identity, and memory. The various interpretations around Turner reflect social tensions and the constant understanding of moral complexities supporting the narrative of slavery in America. Turner’s representation, as well as a historical case study, serves as a lens through which to examine the broader socio-political landscape, highlighting the need to confront the implications of memory, power, and resistance on the collective consciousness of American history. Nat Turner’s rebellion in August 1831 not only represented a significant uprising against the institution of slavery but also had deep implications for abolitionist movements in the United States. The rebellion instilled a sense of fear within the South slave holders, but also galvanized the abolitionists of the North, which led to an intensified discourse that surrounds slavery and its moral implications. This multifaceted response stressed the complexities of abolitionism during this period since several leaders and organizations dealt with the impact of Turner’s actions.²²

²¹ Thomas, "A Bargain With His Brother," 218-247.

²² Randolph Ferguson Scully, *Religion and The Making of Nat Turner's Virginia* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 220.

Immediately after the rebellion, the responses from the South were marked by an atmosphere of fear and repression. Slaveholders implemented strict measures aimed at preventing further insurrections, including toughening slave codes and increasing surveillance of enslaved populations.²³ These actions reflected a growing paranoia among the slaves, who viewed Turner as a symbol of insurrection that could inspire others to rebel. The violent suppression of community resistance revealed the institution of slavery's fragile nature, highlighting the widespread anxiety among slaves regarding potential uprisings.

On the contrary, the rebellion acted as a catalyst for Northern abolitionists, who viewed Turner's actions as a symbol of resistance and a rallying cry against slavery. Prominent figures in the abolition movement, like Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison, reacted to the rebellion not with fear, but with renewed energy and determination to fight for emancipation.²⁴ Douglass pointed out that Turner's rebellion reflected the deep yearning for freedom among enslaved people, arguing that it necessitated a reevaluation of the moral and ethical implications of slavery.

The varying responses among abolitionists illustrate the complex ideological landscape of the movement. While some, like Garrison, maintained a radical stance, advocating for immediate emancipation and condemning any form of violence, others took a more pragmatic approach. For instance, certain abolitionist organizations, such as the American Anti-Slavery Society, sought to capitalize on the momentum created by

²³ Vernon Burton, Kenneth Greenberg, John Craig Hammond, Catherine Stewart, and Ryan Keating, "The Birth of a Nation: A Roundtable," *Civil War History* 64, no. 1 (2018): 56-91.

²⁴ Jarvis R. Givens, "'He Was, Undoubtedly, A Wonderful Character:' Black Teachers' Representations of Nat Turner During Jim Crow," *Souls* 18, no. 2-4 (2016): 215-234.

Turner's rebellion, organizing mass meetings and distributing literature that highlighted the injustices of slavery. Their goal was to draw attention to the conditions under which enslaved individuals lived and humanize them in the eyes of the Northern public.²⁵

Simultaneously, Turner's rebellion invigorated debates about the role of violence in the search for abolition. While some abolitionists condemned Turner's violent actions as counterproductive, arguing that they could alienate possible supporters and feed pro-slavery feelings, others postulated that such actions could be necessary to confront the brutality of slavery. This internal conflict highlighted the philosophical divisions within the abolitionist movement, leading to a more nuanced understanding of resistance against oppression.

In addition, the rebellion had far-reaching effects on public awareness of slavery in the United States. It sparked a national dialogue regarding the moral justification of slavery and led to a surge in literature and activism against it in the North. Works revealing the atrocities of slavery gained popularity, effectively humanizing the plight of enslaved individuals and garnering sympathy from White abolitionists. The collective reaction to Turner's rebellion pushed abolitionist movements into a more aggressive stance, expanding their recruitment of allies and diversifying their strategies in the battle against slavery.²⁶

Therefore, Nat Turner's rebellion serves as a pivotal moment in the history of abolitionism, demonstrating how acts of resistance can instill both fear and resolve. The effects of Turner's actions resonated throughout the abolitionist movement, fostering a

²⁵ Burton, Greenberg, Hammond, Stewart, and Keating, "The Birth of a Nation: A Roundtable," 56-91.

²⁶ Scully, *Religion and The Making of Nat Turner's Virginia*, 209.

more dynamic and controversial dialogue about the future of slavery in the United States and laying the groundwork for the intensified activism that characterized later decades. The impact of Nat Turner's rebellion on slave narratives and Black literature is profound and multifaceted, positioning Turner not only as a historical figure but also as a symbol of resistance and agency in the African American literary tradition. Following the 1831 insurrection, Turner's actions inspired a significant body of literature that challenged the prevailing narratives of the time, which often portrayed enslaved individuals as passive victims of oppression. His rebellion became a crucial reference point for authors who aimed to articulate the complexities of enslaved people and their aspirations for freedom.²⁷ After the rebellion, many ex-slaves, such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, incorporated themes of resistance and the struggle for autonomy in their narratives, drawing on Turner's legacy to emphasize the humanity and resilience of Black individuals in the face of systemic dehumanization.

Furthermore, Turner's life and the violent aftermath of the rebellion exemplified the tensions inherent in depicting Black agency within a literary framework largely dominated by White authors. The immediate effects of the rebellion resulted in heightened repression and stricter slave codes, leading to a lack of authentic Black voices in the public sphere, as White narratives often distort the reality of Black resistance.²⁸ As a result, the challenge for Black authors was significant; they had to navigate a literary landscape that frequently ignored their realities while simultaneously striving to reclaim

²⁷ William L. Andrews, *Slavery and Class in the American South: A Generation of Slave Narrative Testimony, 1840-1865* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 183.

²⁸ Luminita Dragulescu, *Nat Turner in Black and White: Race, Trauma, and the American Cultural Imaginary* (Boston, MA: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 35.

their stories. Turner's defiant revolt served as a counter-narrative, providing a perspective through which Black writers could articulate their anger, frustration, and hope, thereby infusing slave narratives with urgency and a call to action.

The ideological branches of Turner's rebellion rippled through subsequent generations, as its history not only inspired Black literature but also shaped the contours of the abolitionist movement. Turner's challenge became a symbol of the broader struggle against slavery, leading abolitionists to reformulate their arguments for emancipation around narratives of Black agency and resistance stories, as seen in the works of later writers such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Zora Neale Hurston.²⁹ The legacy of the Turner rebellion translates into a rich tradition of literary expression that highlights Black identity, the pursuit of freedom, and the articulation of personal and collective struggles against oppression. This literary production serves not only to memorialize the violent act of rebellion but also to affirm the intricate lives of those who resisted enslavement, enriching the historical narrative around Black agency in America.

Moreover, the themes of resistance embedded in Turner's legacy continue to resonate with contemporary writers, reflecting ongoing struggles against racial injustice. By examining Nat Turner's life and the rebellion that followed, it becomes evident that his legacy has prompted a crucial dialogue within literature, necessitating the acknowledgment of resistance as a central theme. The intertwining of Turner's narrative with those of several other Black authors reveals a literary heritage rooted in challenge and resilience, underscoring the enduring relevance of these narratives in the discourse surrounding race and identity in America. Thus, the task of representing these legacies in

²⁹ Andrews, *Slavery and Class in the American South*, 4.

literature remains essential for understanding the historical and cultural implications of Turner's rebellion, on the evolution of Black authorship and expression. The cultural memory of Nat Turner has evolved significantly since the 1831 rebellion, manifesting in various forms of representation across literature and cinema. These portrayals often oscillate between glorification and vilification, reflecting broader social attitudes toward race, rebellion, and the legacy of slavery in the United States. As a pivotal figure in the history of resistance to slavery, Turner's life and actions have inspired critical interpretation and artistic representation, sparking discussions that are both complex and contentious.³⁰

In literature, Nat Turner's representation has been remarkably molded by several seminal works. *The Concessions of Nat Turner* (1967) by William Styron remains one of the most controversial interpretations of Turner's life. Styron's novel, although fictitious, sought to provide psychological depth to the character of Turner, recasting it as a complex figure driven by moral and spiritual impulses. Critics such as historian Herbert Aptheker argued that Styron's representation runs the risk of simplifying too much the systemic injustices that caused Turner's rebellion.³¹ Others argue that Styron's work reflects the struggle of White authors to deal with Black resistance, often changing the focus of the community and towards the individual, thus strengthening certain colonial narratives within the historical discourse that surrounds slavery.³²

³⁰ Melvin Stokes, "From Uncle Tom to Nat Turner: An Overview of Slavery in American Film," *Transatlantica, Revue d'études Américaines, American Studies Journal* 1 (2018).

³¹ Manisha Sinha, "Slavery on Screen," *Dissent* 64, no. 2 (2017): 16-20.

³² Stokes, "From Uncle Tom to Nat Turner: An Overview of Slavery in American Film."

On the contrary, contemporary narratives increasingly seek to claim Turner's legacy of entrenched perspectives within African American experiences. For example, the recent film "The Birth of a Nation" (2016), directed by Nate Parker, offers a dramatized account of Turner's rebellion and aims to elevate the historical significance of the revolt as an act of resistance against oppression. Parker's work ignited fierce admiration and criticism, highlighting the agency and humanity of enslaved people. Defenders of this interpretation argue that it challenges the prevailing narratives that have historically marginalized or demonized Turner and his compatriots.³³

Additionally, these representations have significant implications for public awareness regarding both historical and contemporary issues surrounding race and justice in the United States. Nat Turner's narrative serves as a lens through which the modern public can connect with the experiences of marginalized communities, reflecting an ongoing negotiation with the racial history of the United States. The direct commitment to Turner's life in an artistic way can spark important discussions about the morality of rebellion, the justification of violence against oppressive systems, and the lasting effects of slavery on social structures, a sentiment supported by academics.³⁴

The exams of these cultural narratives clarify the changing landscape of racial discourse in the United States. In particular, they illuminate how legacies attached to figures such as Turner can invoke a variety of emotions and reactions between the public, shaping social awareness around racial identity and historical injustices of slavery and subjugation. The duality of representation, where Turner can be both a martyr and a

³³ Stokes, "From Uncle Tom to Nat Turner: An Overview of Slavery in American Film."

³⁴ Manisha Sinha, "Slavery on Screen," *Dissent* 64, no. 2 (2017): 16-20.

villain, invites continuous reflection on moral complexities that surround the notion of justice in the face of systemic oppression. Nat Turner's legacy extends far beyond the immediate consequences of the 1831 rebellion, continuing to resonate in contemporary discussions surrounding race, justice, and resistance in modern America. This influence is evident in various forms of collective resistance, as well as continuous struggles for civil rights, and the broadest discourse on systemic injustice faced by marginalized communities. Turner's insurrection serves as a symbolic touchstone for discussions about direct action against oppression, personifying long-standing dissatisfaction with the institution of slavery and systemic racism that has persisted in various ways throughout the history of the United States.

When analyzing Turner's actions, many contemporary academics and activists draw parallels to modern movements such as Black Lives Matter, which seeks to address systemic racism and violence against Black individuals in the United States. The moral imperative to confront injustice, whether through peaceful protest or more radical means, reflects the same currents of discontent that fueled Turner and his followers to rebel against the oppressive shackles of slavery.³⁵ The narrative of Turner's rebellion serves to inspire current activists, framing the fight against racial injustice as a continuation and an appropriate response to historical wrongs.

Turner's challenge encapsulates a critical moment in the fight against oppression, illustrating the complexities of resistance. Their actions spark discussions about the ethical implications of rebellion, martyrdom, and heroism in the context of systemic

³⁵ John MacKilgore, "Nat Turner and the Work of Enthusiasm," *PMLA* 130, no. 5 (2015): 1347-1362.

oppression. The belief that oppressed people have the right to rebel against their oppressors resonates today, particularly in the face of current socioeconomic disparities and racial disparities that affect the United States.³⁶

In addition, exposure to Turner's life and actions encourages the contemporary public to confront the uncomfortable truths of American history, which culminated in calls for justice and reform. The dialogue surrounding Turner reveals important discussions about moral capacity, agency, and the tension between individual and collective actions in the broader liberation struggle. His legacy challenges the rhetoric of a post-racial society, highlighting the persistent realities of racial inequality and the need for a comprehensive recognition of U.S. history.

Additionally, Turner's legacy has manifested in literature, art, and academia, providing a foundation for understanding resistance in various contexts. Works such as *The Concessions of Nat Turner* by William Styron and, more recently, *The Fire This Time* by Jesmyn Ward reflect on issues of resistance and the pursuit of social justice. In these works, Turner's narrative is interwoven with broader themes of Black identity and empowerment, positioning him as a significant historical figure whose relevance endures in contemporary advocacy and education.³⁷

The discussion about Turner highlights the intersection of race and justice in the United States today, prompting a critical examination of the application of law, the right to vote, and educational inequities. Its history becomes a lens through which the current social movements can articulate their objectives and justifications, linking past struggles

³⁶ Michael Lackey, "Separatists, Integrationists and William Styron's Confessions of Nat Turner," *Mississippi Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2016): 65-91.

³⁷ Lackey, "Separatists, Integrationists and William Styron's Confessions of Nat Turner," 65-91.

against slavery and racial oppression with the contemporary struggle for social justice. Activists and academics continue to invoke Turner's challenge while facing the legacies of White supremacy and systemic oppression, reaffirming the importance of their actions to promote a spirit of resistance that lasts in modern America.

Therefore, Nat Turner's life and the rebellion he led remain powerful symbols as they are invoked in the discourse surrounding race and justice. Its legacy signifies not only a historical moment of resistance but also a continuous call to action for those facing a dynamic of unequal power in the pursuit of a fair society. Nat Turner's life and the 1831 rebellion remain fundamental moments in the complex narrative of American slavery and the fight against it. The complexities of Turner's existence, from his education as an enslaved person in Virginia to his religious visions that motivated his revolt, encapsulate the multifaceted nature of resistance against systemic oppression. His life illustrates how personal and collective identities are intertwined in the broader struggle for freedom. The rebellion he orchestrated, which resulted in the death of approximately sixty White individuals and provoked severe retaliation against the African American population, highlights the serious consequences that often accompany such acts of challenge.³⁸

Turner's revolt had immediate repercussions that reverberated far beyond the borders of Southampton County. He instigated a fear wave among slaves, which caused stricter laws and tougher servitude conditions throughout the South. Subsequently, it influenced the evolution of ideology in favor of slavery, since many White Southerners intensified their arguments against abolitionism and defended the institution of slavery as

³⁸ Peter I. Rose, *Americans from Africa: Old Memories, New Moods* (London, UK: Routledge, 2017), 111.

necessary and benevolent. Following the rebellion, Turner was executed, and his actions were vilified in the southern press, but his legacy persisted as a resistance symbol.

The broader implications of Turner's rebellion extend to the narrative of abolitionist movements. While his violent uprising led to convictions, he also sparked new conversations about the dire conditions of enslaved people and the moral consequences of slavery itself. Turner's actions inspired both fear and admiration, contributing to a rising abolitionist sentiment among Northern activists who viewed him as a martyr in the struggle against injustice.³⁹ His rebellion prompted a critical examination of the ethics of the slavery system, which influenced the discourse on human rights.

Nat Turner's legacy is complex and multifaceted. It became an emblem of the desperate struggle for freedom, embodying the darkest aspects of the institution of slavery while also igniting conversations about autonomy and resistance. In contemporary discussions about civil rights, its history encourages a nuanced understanding of the lengths to which individuals and communities will go when they face oppression. The moral ambiguities surrounding their rebellion evoke a wide range of interpretations regarding resistance, agency, and the ethical implications of violent actions against systemic injustice.

In addition, Turner's legacy has been a fundamental element in the African American narrative of resilience and resistance. The commemoration of Turner's actions evolved, influencing literature, cultural discourse, and even modern civil rights movements. Its history serves as a catalyst to examine the struggles in progress against

³⁹ Christopher Tomlins, "Debt, Death, and Redemption: Towards a Soterial Legal History of the Turner Rebellion," *Exploring the 'Legal' in Socio-Legal Studies* (2016): 35-56.

racial injustice and continuous efforts to achieve equality in American society. Therefore, Turner's role in rebellion and its consequences resonate within contemporary resistance frameworks, urging academics and activists to face the complexities of oppression in modern times. Nat Turner's life and rebellion encapsulate vital lessons with respect to the intersections of faith, agency, and collective action in the search for liberation, underlining the lasting struggle against inequality and servitude.^{40, 41}

⁴⁰ Rose, *Americans from Africa*, 107.

⁴¹ Tomlins, "Debt, Death and Redemption: Towards a Soterial Legal History of the Turner Rebellion," 35-56.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The theological foundations of evangelism encapsulate a rich tapestry of biblical mandates, ecclesiastical traditions, and the transformative participation of the community. Fundamentally, evangelism is deeply rooted in the Great Commission articulated in Matthew 28:19-20, where the command is “to go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” This imperative not only emphasizes the need to spread the Gospel but also highlights the urgency of contextualizing the message to resonate with diverse populations. In urban environments, particularly among marginalized demographics, this task becomes increasingly relevant. Young Black individuals represent a critical subgroup facing unique socioeconomic challenges, often aggravated by systemic inequalities and cultural disconnection within institutional frameworks, including the Church.¹

The need to involve young Blacks from a theological perspective lies in the intersectionality of faith and social justice. The theological discourse on evangelism should not be considered as a mere spiritual exercise or organizational objective. Rather, the multifaceted identity and the experiences of young Blacks in urban contexts must be taken into account. Historical and continuous struggles with racial discrimination,

¹ Carver L. Anderson, *Towards a Practical Theology for Effective Responses to Black Young Men associated with Crime for Black Majority Churches* (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2015).

economic deprivation of their rights, and cultural alienation require an evangelistic approach that is about addressing systemic problems and spiritual salvation. This understanding forces the evangelists and church leaders to adopt an approach that does not ignore the contextual realities and cultural nuances of this demographic group but adopts them as an integral part of the evangelistic process.²

Cultural relevance in evangelism can enhance the effectiveness of strategies for reaching young Black individuals. Recognizing and honoring the cultural, social, and linguistic identities of this group allows evangelistic efforts to foster authentic relationships and build mutual trust. The gospel message, when conveyed through culturally relevant perspectives, can resonate profoundly, creating an inclusive environment where young Black people feel not only welcome but also valued. The theological frameworks that emphasize dignity, respect, and an understanding of individual and collective narratives are essential. Such an approach draws on a Christology that embodies empathy and relational commitment, hallmarks of Jesus' ministry, which underscores the importance of addressing people within their contexts of pain and aspiration.³

Therefore, effective dissemination methods must incorporate community-based strategies that empower young Black men, aligning with the theological bases that require justice, inclusion, and love for the neighbor. Initiatives such as tutoring programs, community service projects, and dialogue forums can serve as practical vehicles to apply

² Carver L. Anderson, *Towards a Practical Theology for Effective Responses to Black Young Men associated with Crime for Black Majority Churches* (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2015).

³ Carver L. Anderson, *Towards a Practical Theology for Effective Responses to Black Young Men associated with Crime for Black Majority Churches* (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2015).

theological principles in a culturally relevant way. In addition, these strategies can transform the evangelistic methods of typical confrontation into relational dynamics, creating opportunities for a genuine human connection. This relational framework aligns with the biblical vision of kingdom construction, which advocates for the holistic development of individuals and communities.

Moreover, effective evangelism cannot occur in isolation from the social realities that these young individuals face. It requires a collaborative approach that involves local organizations, family structures, and faith-based communities to create sustainable pathways for discipleship and growth. By integrating biblical teachings with practical support systems, evangelism not only enhances spiritual life but also addresses the real challenges that young Black people face in urban settings. This convergence of faith and practice necessitates a re-examination of traditional evangelistic methodologies, urging modern leaders to shape their efforts based on the lived experiences of those they aim to engage.⁴

Focusing evangelism on these theological foundations creates transformative potential that extends beyond mere conversion, inviting young Black individuals to a holistic experience of community, purpose, and faith. The journey of evangelism in urban environments must reflect a commitment to understanding and addressing the complexities of cultural dynamics and community issues, paving the way for deeper commitment and lasting impact. The historical context of Black evangelism in urban settings is deeply intertwined with the socioeconomic and cultural dynamics that have shaped the lives of young Black people in the United States. Starting with the Great

⁴ Carver L. Anderson, *Towards a Practical Theology for Effective Responses to Black Young Men associated with Crime for Black Majority Churches* (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2015).

Migration at the beginning of the twentieth century, millions of African Americans moved from the Southern rural areas to urban centers in search of better economic opportunities and an escape from systemic racism and the oppression of Jim Crow laws. This migration significantly transformed urban demographics and laid the groundwork for a flourishing community of the Black church, which became one of the primary institutions for social support and spiritual life.⁵

In urban environments, the Church served not only as a place of worship but also as a refuge and a platform for political and social advocacy. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s amplified this role, with Black churches at the forefront of efforts for social justice and equality. Leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., exemplified the integration of theological principles with social activism, particularly by involving young Black men who were disproportionately affected by systemic issues such as unemployment, crime, and deprivation of rights. These historical roots provide crucial insight into the ongoing challenges faced by young Black individuals today, including current socioeconomic disparities and the repercussions of mass incarceration.⁶

In addition, the challenges of urban life have often been exacerbated by negative stereotypes and social marginalization, which can alienate young Blacks from the traditional pathways of faith-based participation. However, these challenges have also given rise to unique opportunities for the Church to reassess its dissemination strategies, promoting a more inclusive environment that emphasizes cultural relevance. Involving

⁵ Janet Langat, *The Role of the Church in Evangelizing Urban Youth: A Case of St. Peter Claver's Catholic Parish, Nairobi County* (PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2017).

⁶ Janet Langat, *The Role of the Church in Evangelizing Urban Youth: A Case of St. Peter Claver's Catholic Parish, Nairobi County* (PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2017).

young Blacks requires understanding their experiences and the different narratives that shape their world views. Therefore, contemporary evangelism must navigate the delicate balance of addressing spiritual and practical concerns, recognizing that faith cannot divorce its adherents' cultural and social realities.

When examining practical dissemination methods, it is essential to consider how these approaches have evolved in response to historical contexts. Community activism, tutoring programs, and initiatives aimed at addressing youth unemployment and education are integral to the modern efforts of the Black church. These endeavors reflect a broader understanding of evangelism that extends beyond mere conversion to the transformation of the holistic community, aligning faith with action. Such strategies are vital for creating safe spaces where young Black individuals can explore their faith and identity while acquiring skills that are crucial for personal development.⁷

Digital technology and social networks provide new ways to engage this demographic group. The integration of social networking platforms enables churches to effectively share messages of hope and empowerment, fostering a sense of community among young Black individuals even outside traditional church settings. By utilizing these tools, faith leaders can connect with younger audiences and address their cultural contexts while offering a meaningful spiritual orientation.

In general, the historical panorama of Black evangelism in urban environments underlines the importance of developing culturally relevant approaches for dissemination. Recognizing the complexities of urban life and the specific challenges faced by young Black people can inform strategies that not only attract but also raise and empower them

⁷ Janet Langat, *The Role of the Church in Evangelizing Urban Youth: A Case of St. Peter Claver's Catholic Parish, Nairobi County* (PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2017).

within their communities. Such an approach aligns with the theological understanding of evangelism as a transforming process that encompasses spiritual and social dimensions, highlighting the need for churches to adapt their methods to remain impressive and relevant in the lives of Black young people in urban environments.⁸

Cultural relevance serves as a central component in the formulation of evangelism strategies designed to involve Black young people in urban environments. The effectiveness of these strategies depends on the communicative alignment between the theological message of the Gospel and the experiences, values, and cultural expressions of the target demographic. Contemporary urban culture, particularly among young Black men, is often characterized by a rich tapestry of artistic and expressive forms, such as hip-hop music, spoken-word poetry, and street art. Involvement with these cultural elements is not just an auxiliary method of communication but a crucial avenue for authentic connection and resonance.

Hip-hop culture remains a dominant narrative among urban youth, incorporating themes of resilience, identity, social justice, and community. Bible-based themes that address suffering, redemption, and hope parallel the lyrical content often found in hip-hop. For example, artists such as Lecrae and Trip Lee communicate gospel messages through their lyrics, appealing to a demographic that might otherwise be disenchanted with traditional forms of evangelism. This integration allows young Black individuals to see their reflections in the Gospel narrative, reinforcing the idea that their struggles and

⁸ Janet Langat, *The Role of the Church in Evangelizing Urban Youth: A Case of St. Peter Claver's Catholic Parish, Nairobi County* (PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2017).

triumphs are acknowledged and addressed by the faith community.⁹ A culturally adapted approach not only broadens the appeal of the message but also fosters a deeper understanding of its significance in their lives.

Incorporating spoken-word poetry as a method of dissemination further exemplifies how evangelism can achieve cultural relevance. The performances of spoken word convey messages in a dynamic and often interactive format that resonates with the public, inviting them to engage emotionally and intellectually with the content. For example, poetry events led by the Church or community open mic nights can create a space where young Black individuals freely express their experiences and explore theological themes, thereby enhancing their engagement with the gospel in a meaningful context. This format is not just an artistic platform; it also fosters dialogue on pertinent issues such as faith, identity, and community challenges.

Furthermore, the strategic use of urban visual arts, such as graffiti and murals that convey gospel messages in community spaces, can illuminate pathways to engagement. These visual expressions often communicate profound truths and can revitalize urban landscapes, presenting faith in a manner that feels accessible and relevant. They can inspire discussions about community hope, justice, and empowerment—the key themes that resonate deeply with the lived experiences of young Black people.¹⁰

In addition to artistic expressions, leveraging social media platforms also plays a critical role in the reach of urban youth. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have the potential to widely disseminate gospel messages and foster community

⁹ Eric Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity With The Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 49.

¹⁰ Mason, *Urban Apologetics*, 163.

dialogues that transcend geographical boundaries. Involving Black young people in these arenas, which attests to the thought-provoking content that addresses their specific experiences and concerns, is a significant change in traditional evangelistic methods. Multimedia campaigns that present figures, testimonies, and discussions related to faith in contemporary contexts can generate interest and promote connection, encouraging participation in the life of the church.

In summary, integrating culturally relevant strategies is essential for effectively involving young Black individuals with the gospel. Hip-hop, spoken word, urban art, and digital platforms create a multifaceted approach that resonates with youth culture, leading to more meaningful interactions and fostering an environment where faith is seen as relevant rather than distant. In this regard, the theological foundations of evangelism must adapt and continuously respond to cultural dynamics to remain vibrantly relevant and impactful. Orientation programs play a crucial role in dissemination efforts targeting young Black individuals in urban environments, particularly in the context of evangelism. The theological foundations of the orientation can be traced back to biblical principles that emphasize community support, discipleship, and personal growth. Proverbs 27:17 states: “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another,” illustrating the importance of relationships in promoting individual development. These relationships can have profound spiritual and emotional implications for young Black individuals navigating the complexities of urban life.

Empirical research supports the premise that orientation not only provides guidance but also serves as a catalyst for broader personal and spiritual growth.¹¹ Young

¹¹ Tomomi J. Owens, *Emmaus Road: Intentional Mentoring in the Black Church Tradition* (DMin diss., Regent University, 2017).

Black people in urban environments often find systemic challenges, including economic instability, racial discrimination, and lack of access to quality education. These adversities can lead to feelings of isolation and hopelessness. Therefore, guidance programs designed with cultural relevance in mind can provide crucial support structures that address emotional and spiritual health. By combining young Black people with mentors who share similar cultural backgrounds, experiences, and journeys of faith, these programs become vehicles for empowerment and resilience.

An effective strategy in orientation programs is to incorporate practices and narratives that culturally align with the lived experiences of young Black individuals. For instance, using stories as an orientation tool can create a shared space where boys are encouraged to express their narratives and challenges. This approach not only validates their experiences but also connects them to a larger community of faith and resilience. Research indicates that young people who engage in narrative practices during orientation often show improved self-esteem and a clearer sense of identity, which is crucial for their spiritual development.¹²

Additionally, orientation programs that encourage active participation in community service can foster a sense of purpose among Black young people. Biblical teachings, such as Matthew 5:16, which encourage believers to let their light shine before others, can be an integral part of community service as a form of evangelism. Through orientation agreements that involve collective service projects, young people can experience the dual benefits of personal fulfillment and community involvement. This

¹² Andrea Smith, *Unreconciled: From Racial Reconciliation to Racial Justice in Christian Evangelism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 219.

approach not only resonates with participants but also aligns with the broader theological structures of justice and administration that are fundamental to some urban ministries.

Furthermore, practical disclosure methods should aim to integrate modern communication technologies and platforms to enhance orientation relationships. In an era where digital connections dominate, utilizing social media and mobile applications to support orientation relationships can provide flexibility and easy access to mentors. For instance, programs can leverage platforms that enable virtual meetings, which ensure consistent support and guidance without geographical limitations. These strategies keep orientation relevant and accessible, recognizing where Black youth are in their lives. Effective guidance programs for young Black individuals should also emphasize holistic development, encompassing spiritual, emotional, and physical growth. The integration of health components and overall well-being into guidance can address broader issues that disproportionately affect this demographic, such as mental health challenges and social pressures.

To summarize, while orientation programs have significant promise in involving and building effective Black men, their success depends on culturally-adapted approaches that resonate with the spiritual and practical realities of their lives. From narrative to community service and the use of technology, the strategies employed in these programs should reflect the theological foundations of evangelism, thus creating support environments where personal and spiritual growth can flourish. The ministries based in the Church play a fundamental role in both evangelization and empowerment, particularly for young Black individuals in urban environments, where socio-economic challenges significantly impact their ability to thrive. The theological bases of

evangelization support a holistic approach to the ministry, one that faces the spiritual, emotional, and material needs, which underlines the need to develop global programs that not only evangelize but also provide young Black people with the skills necessary for leadership and common service.¹³

One of the key aspects of an effective ministry is the creation of educational components that are culturally relevant and sensitive to the socio-economic realities faced by this demographic. Empowerment-oriented ministries often include the development of life skills, educational seminars, and tutoring programs. These initiatives foster a sense of agency among young Black individuals, encouraging them to actively engage in their communities while integrating theological teachings that emphasize respect, resilience, and responsibility.

For example, programs like the Man Up initiative, launched in various urban churches, seek to provide young Black individuals with tutoring and support networks that promote personal and professional growth. This program highlights the significance of biblical figures as examples of leadership and employs narrative writing to convey lessons on management, discipline, and perseverance. The Church utilizes these narratives to foster a strong sense of identity and purpose among participants, empowering them to become leaders not only within the Church but also in their local communities.

In facing socio-economic challenges, it is essential that these ministries integrate practical awareness methods. Initiatives such as seminars on financial literacy and

¹³ Evelyn Mercado Johnson, *Design for Church-Based Ministry to Evangelize, Educate, and Empower Latino (a) s/Hispanics in the Predominantly Black/African American Membership of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Hampton Virginia* (DMin diss., Regent University, 2018).

professional consultancy sessions are closely tied to the theological principles of administration and community service. These offerings are crucial in teaching young Black individuals how to navigate systemic barriers that often hinder their socio-economic mobility. By equipping them with tools to manage finances and pursue educational opportunities, ministries can instill trust and a sense of possibility.

Cultural relevance is essential in these commitments. Ministries that emphasize culturally informed programming are more likely to connect with young Black individuals. This can be accomplished through the inclusion of culturally relevant music, language, and rituals that celebrate Black heritage. For instance, integrating gospel musical elements into awareness-raising activities can foster a deep connection with one's cultural identity, enhancing the overall impact of evangelistic efforts. Additionally, utilizing recognizable figures from the community—individuals who have successfully overcome similar challenges—can inspire and motivate young people to pursue their dreams.

Furthermore, collaboration with local schools, businesses, and organizations enhances the effectiveness of raising awareness about church-based ministries. By forming partnerships, churches can broaden their reach beyond the sanctuary and initiate projects that engage the community, fostering relationships and building trust. These initiatives may include community service awareness, tutoring programs, and job fairs, all of which can lead to meaningful changes in the lives of young Black individuals.

The strategic integration of theology with community needs offers a powerful model for empowerment through evangelization. The ministries focused on young Black individuals do not only preach the Gospel but also embody the principles of justice, hope,

and service while confronting the unique challenges faced by this community. By adopting a multifaceted approach that emphasizes education, leadership development, and community commitment, these ministries can transform the lives of young Black people, fostering both spiritual growth and socio-economic progress. Social justice plays a vital role in the theological foundations of evangelization, particularly in addressing the needs of marginalized populations, such as young Black men in urban areas. The intersection of faith and social action is not merely an additional approach within evangelical practices; it serves as a crucial framework for ministry that seeks to proclaim the Gospel and respond to systemic inequalities.¹⁴ This dual emphasis fosters an environment of empowerment and support that is essential for engaging young Black men who often encounter social, economic, and political barriers in their daily lives.

The theological foundations of social justice are deeply rooted in scriptural teachings. The Old Testament calls for justice and justice as central to the identity of the faith community, illustrated in prophetic literature which advocates the oppressed (Amos 5:24). Likewise, the New Testament emphasizes the Ministry of Christ as the one who actively wanted those who are on the sidelines, declaring the good news to the poor and freeing the oppressed (Lk. 4:18). This biblical mandate deeply resonates in urban contexts, where young Black men are often confronted with discrimination, poverty, and dislocation. Thus, an evangelization strategy which incorporates social justice is not only an act of mercy, but an accomplishment of the Christian mission, equipping with churches to serve as transformation instruments in their communities.

¹⁴ Brantley W. Gasaway, *Progressive Evangelicals and the Pursuit of Social Justice* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press Books, 2014), 39.

In practical awareness-raising methods, churches can harness the principles of social justice by hiring Black men through community partnerships, mentoring programs, and advocacy initiatives that address local needs. For instance, initiatives that offer educational support, vocational training, and mental health services can clarify the Church's role, portraying it as an ally in the broader fight for equity and opportunity. Programs that elevate the voices and experiences of young Black men can also foster a sense of agency and leadership within the community, which is vital for effective evangelistic awareness.

In addition, the inclusivity of evangelical efforts centered on social justice not only nurtures relationships but also promotes a safe space for dialogue on faith and the challenges of life. The establishment of confidence within these communities compels churches to demonstrate a real commitment beyond mere spiritual conversion, engaging in coherent and authentic relationships that reflect the love and justice.¹⁵ It is within this relational context that evangelization can truly thrive, as it resonates with the experiences and aspirations of young Black men.

Cultural relevance is essential in mobilizing evangelization efforts, which resonate with unique historical stories and the contemporary realities faced by this demographic. By recognizing and honoring cultural expressions, such as art, music, and narration, churches can create more effective platforms for evangelical engagement. Given the importance of cultural identity, the Church can utilize events and gatherings that incorporate these elements, thereby inviting broader participation while affirming the

¹⁵ Tomomi J. Owens, *Emmaus Road: Intentional Mentoring in the Black Church Tradition* (D.Min. diss., Regent University, 2017).

rich heritage of young Black men. This enriches not only the experience of community worship but also challenges the stereotypes and false ideas that often marginalize this group.¹⁶

In integrating social justice with evangelization, congregations can create a model of holistic ministry that serves as a transformative force. This approach compels churches to address spiritual, social, and economic disparities, thereby facilitating the empowerment and elevation of young Black men in urban areas. By reinforcing a theological foundation that supports advocacy, solidarity, and community commitment, the Church not only realizes its evangelical values but also exemplifies the essence of the Gospel in action. The urgent need for churches to embody this integrated approach underlines the transformative power of evangelization based on the principles of social justice. The role of church leaders and community personalities in the operationalization of the awareness of evangelization, which speaks to the lived experiences of young Black men, is crucial to promote an effective and transformative evangelical effort. Leadership in church contexts goes beyond mere organizational management; it includes the responsibility to understand and address the unique socio-cultural dynamics that young Black men encounter in urban settings. Additionally, it has been suggested that authenticity in leadership is vital for the success of awareness initiatives, particularly during efforts to engage marginalized population.¹⁷

¹⁶ Antipas L. Harris, "Emerging African American Pentecostal Sources in Public Theology," *International Journal of Theology* 13, no. 4 (2019): 472-493.

¹⁷ Deborah King McEwan, *The Perspective of Black Church Leaders on their Roles in the Empowerment of Black Male Students* (PhD diss., Florida Atlantic University, 2019).

Effective church leaders must first have a global understanding of the historical and systemic factors that contribute to the lived experiences of young Black men. This includes an awareness of socio-economic challenges, educational disparities, police brutality, and the impact of systemic racism. By recognizing these realities, church chiefs can develop evangelical messages and programs that resonate with the personal struggles, aspirations, and cultural identities of young Black men. Such an enlightened approach aligns the efforts of evangelization with the principle of contextualization, which emphasizes the importance of adapting the Gospel message to the cultural context of the public.

Additionally, church leaders should actively engage in community partnerships that enhance their awareness efforts. Collaborations with local organizations, schools, and businesses can provide extra resources and venues for evangelical engagement. For instance, awareness programs that incorporate mentorship, vocational training, or conflict resolution workshops not only provide immediate assistance but also create a platform for spiritual conversations. By embedding evangelization awareness within the broader context of community support, church leaders can demonstrate their dedication to holistic development that addresses both spiritual and practical needs.

In addition, the involvement of respected community characters, such as local activists, educators, and athletes, can improve the credibility and relevance of the Church in the eyes of young Black men. These figures often embody shared experiences and values that resonate with this demography, which makes their participation in particularly impactful evangelical efforts. When church leaders collaborate with individuals who have established confidence and influence within the community, they foster a sense of

belonging and acceptance, which is essential for promoting faith commitments among young Black men.

In developing awareness strategies, church leaders must also consider the communication methods that resonate with young Black men. This demographic is often inclined towards contemporary media forms, including social platforms, music, and art. By leveraging these channels, church leaders can create evangelical content that is both culturally relevant and appealing. For instance, integrating hip-hop and urban art into religious services or community events can create a more welcoming atmosphere while offering a means for exploration and theological expression.

Finally, the intentional inclusion of young Black men in leadership and decision-making roles within the Church can foster a sense of ownership in evangelical initiatives. Empowering these individuals ensures that initiatives reflect their interests, experiences, and aspirations. It creates pathways for mentorship and leadership development, promoting a sustainable engagement cycle where young Black men not only receive guidance but also transition into roles where they can uplift their peers. This dynamic strengthens the communal aspect of faith, encouraging a deeper and more collective spiritual journey that transcends traditional models of awareness.

Conclusion

In summary, church leaders and community figures play a crucial role in the operationalization of evangelization that is both relevant and effective for young Black men. A deep understanding of the cultural context, strategic partnerships, innovative communication methods, and a focus on inclusive leadership characterize their

involvement. These components are crucial for successfully engaging young Black men in urban environments, fostering a more inclusive and transformative evangelical mission. The decline in church participation rates among young Black individuals presents a significant challenge for contemporary evangelism, highlighting the urgent need for effective strategies that attract and retain commitment within this demographic group. The decrease roots are multifaceted, covering social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions that require an intentional direction to reverse emerging trends. To effectively involve young Black individuals, strategies must be grounded in the truths of the scriptures that resonate with their lived experiences, aiming to raise and empower them in urban environments.

The theological foundations that provide the basis for effective evangelism underline the need for pious leadership. These leaders must embody and model biblical virtues such as integrity, compassion, and authenticity, based on the principles found in all Scriptures. The leadership style must be transformative—a message that not only speaks of personal salvation but also addresses systemic problems that affect young Blacks, including socio-economic disparities, racial injustice, and the search for identity. The integration of these issues into evangelistic efforts aligns with the call of the prophetic ministry seen in the Old Testament, emphasizing social justice and the elevation of the community as integral facets of the Gospel (Is. 1:17).

When considering practical methods of dissemination, it is essential to cultivate relevance within the cultural context that young Black individuals inhabit. A promising approach is developing tutoring programs that connect youth with leaders who share similar histories and experiences. Such relationships can be transformative, offering

opportunities for holistic development and spiritual guidance. Informal gatherings in community spaces, such as barber shops, basketball courts, and music venues, can serve as platforms, making them feel authentic and accessible to this community. Utilizing sports ministries, musical events, and community service initiatives can create pathways for connection, allowing young Black individuals to witness the Gospel in action.

The innovative use of technology also plays a vital role in contemporary evangelism. Social networking platforms can be utilized to share testimonies, promote events, and engage in meaningful conversations about faith and identity. The platforms where young Black individuals already gather can serve as spaces for dialogue, leading to an exploration of important spiritual concepts relevant to their lives. This digital participation must be approached with a commitment to authenticity and vulnerability, as significant connections often develop in environments where people feel represented and understood.

In addition, promoting a culture of a welcoming church is essential to reverse the tendency of decreased assistance among young Blacks. Congregations must work diligently to ensure that their environments reflect inclusion, demonstrating a commitment to unite cultural divisions while affirming the unique experiences of young Black individuals. The implementation of initiatives that celebrate diversity within worship, through music, language, and preaching styles, can create a richer and cozy atmosphere.

Ultimately, integrating these strategies requires a thorough examination of the local context, enabling churches to tailor their approaches to the specific needs and challenges of their surrounding communities. By emphasizing pious leadership,

demonstrating cultural relevance, and employing practical dissemination methods grounded in biblical principles, the potential emerges to reverse the concerning trend of church involvement among young Black men. This holistic approach not only fosters commitment but also nurtures a supportive community that empowers young Blacks to thrive spiritually and socially in urban environments. In these settings, particularly those marked by socio-economic and cultural challenges, practical awareness methods are vital for engaging young Blacks. By combining evangelism with family-focused and engaging activities tailored to this demographic, churches can foster genuine and transformative relationships. They highlight that contextualizing evangelism in everyday activities can make churches more accessible and, as a result, more effective in their outreach efforts.¹⁸

Sport, for example, has a unique potential as a means of commitment. The popularity of basketball, football, and other athletic activities within urban communities offers a platform for churches to create inclusive environments. By organizing regular sporting events, championships, or tournaments, churches can attract young Blacks who can initially be resistant to traditional forms of awareness. The events that encourage teamwork and camaraderie can facilitate discussions on faith and personal growth, integrating spiritual teachings in a natural and non-intrusive way. This method not only promotes physical well-being but also fosters relational connections that enhance trust and openness among participants.

Furthermore, the arts create a rich environment for commitment. Initiatives focused on music, visual arts, or performances can have a profound impact on young Black individuals, many of whom express their identities and experiences through these

¹⁸ Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 163-168.

mediums. By establishing programs that promote creative expression, churches can foster environments where individuals feel valued and understood. Seminars, open mic nights, and art exhibitions can serve as platforms for dialogue about faith, identity, and community-related social issues. These events can also underscore the theological principles of creativity and stewardship, encouraging participants to explore and celebrate their God-given talents.

Civic activities further integrate awareness-raising efforts by emphasizing the community's service and involvement. The organization of cleaning units, youth tutoring, or the defense of local issues can enable young Black individuals to contribute actively to their neighborhoods. This involvement not only develops a sense of belonging but also aligns closely with Christian teachings on service and the community. Building on the connection between faith and action, churches can present a compelling narrative that emphasizes the transformative power of faith in action, thereby motivating young people to make a significant commitment.

Furthermore, incorporating technology into awareness strategies is crucial in an era where digital interaction is prevalent. Utilizing social media platforms, podcasts, and interactive websites can help raise awareness among young Black individuals who may not regularly attend church services. By leveraging digital media, churches can create content that addresses the unique challenges and aspirations of this demographic, offering small theological reflections that resonate with their lived experiences. Online communities can also serve as spaces for support and dialogue, helping to dismantle the barriers that can inhibit face-to-face interactions.

In summary, the integration of sports, arts, and civic activities, such as practical awareness methods, allows churches to make evangelization more relevant and effective in urban contexts. By contextualizing spiritual commitment within the cultural frameworks of youth, congregations are positioned not only as places of worship but also as essential community resources aimed at uplifting and inspiring young Black individuals in their personal faith journeys. When summarizing the theological basis of evangelization alongside practical awareness strategies, it is crucial to recognize the potential for significant change when these elements converge in efforts to empower young Black people in urban settings. Integrating culturally informed evangelization models requires a nuanced understanding of the unique challenges and experiences faced by this demographic. Theological perspectives that emphasize social justice, community commitment, and personal transformation serve to ground this dissemination in a profound spiritual framework, resonating with the lives of young Black individuals who may feel marginalized in broader society.¹⁹

For effective awareness, it is essential to engage with the cultural narratives and historical contexts that define the communities served. This entails the recognition of the meaning of identity, heritage, and collective experiences in modeling the world's vision of young Blacks. Culturally relevant approaches in evangelization can favor a sense of belonging and spiritual kinship that transcends the settings of the traditional Church.²⁰ A practical strategy is the incorporation of the narrative within the evangelistic efforts,

¹⁹ Smith, *Unreconciled*, 205.

²⁰ F. E. Freeks, "A Missional evaluation of the LIFEPLAN® Training and Equipping Programme for Youth in Rural Areas: A Case Study of its Impact in the Christiana District of South Africa" (PhD diss, North-West University, 2018).

which allows young Blacks to see their stories reflected in biblical narratives and contemporary testimonies. Using culturally-relevant means, such as music, art, and spoken word, outreach initiatives can create spaces where young people feel represented and empowered.

Moreover, developing tutoring programs within faith communities can serve as a practical means of fostering awareness that demonstrates a commitment to relational ministry. Tutoring not only offers assistance and support but also helps cultivate leadership skills and promote resilience among young Black individuals who face systemic barriers. Aligning tutoring practices with theological teachings on discipleship, along with community support, reinforces the notion that faith is best expressed through action and solidarity.²¹

The models of evangelism based on the community also emphasize the collaboration with local organizations, schools, and civic groups that share an investment in the well-being of young Blacks in urban contexts. By exploiting existing resources and partnerships, churches can respond more effectively to the multifaceted needs of this population, such as education, employment, and mental health services. This approach aligns with the idea of the Church as a transformative presence in society, working not only to save souls but to implement holistic change.²²

The theological paintings that prioritize the intrinsic dignity and the value of each individual can provide solid foundations for awareness-raising efforts. The principles of

²¹ Smith, *Unreconciled*, 85-86.

²² F. E. Freeks, "A Missional Evaluation of the LIFEPLAN® Training and Equipping Programme for Youth in Rural Areas: A Case Study of its Impact in the Christiana District of South Africa" (PhD diss., North-West University, 2018).

love, grace, and redemption, divided into various religious traditions, must underline the strategies of involvement, ensuring that young Blacks are seen as worthy of these divine promises. By affirmatively articulating a vision of hope that is both practical and spiritual, evangelistic efforts can inspire young people to envision a future that transcends the challenges they face.²³

Finally, the ongoing evaluation and adaptation of awareness programs are vital to maintaining cultural relevance and effectiveness. Feedback from the target demographic should inform strategies to ensure alignment with their evolving needs and aspirations. Involving young Black individuals in the design and implementation of evangelistic initiatives fosters ownership and agency, promoting a commitment supported by both faith and community.²⁴

The intersection of the theological bases and practical awareness is vital to develop a model of evangelization in tune with the realities of young Blacks in urban environments. By embracing culturally-relevant approaches, exploiting different resources, and promoting the commitment led by the community, the communities of faith can support and raise this demography, contributing to a more just and fair society.

²³ Smith, *Unreconciled*, 85-86

²⁴ F. E. Freeks, "A Missional Evaluation of the LIFEPLAN® Training and Equipping Programme for Youth in Rural Areas: A Case Study of its Impact in the Christiana District of South Africa" (PhD diss., North-West University, 2018).

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Black Studies represent a significant interdisciplinary field of investigation that critically examines the experiences, stories, and cultures of Black individuals and communities. Rooted in sociology, Black Studies foregrounds the complexities of race as a social construct and studies how dynamics of power shape the lived realities of marginalized groups. This perspective is particularly relevant when examining Nat Turner's life, a historical figure whose actions have resonated throughout American history as a powerful symbol of resistance against oppression. Utilizing sociological perspectives enables a nuanced understanding of Turner's rebellion, not merely as an isolated insurrection, but rather as a confluence of spirituality, systemic injustice, and the quest for agency that characterized the Black experience in Antebellum America.

Sociology provides a critical lens through which the rebellion can be analyzed alongside intersecting factors such as class, gender, and spirituality. Turner's rebellion in 1831 serves as a profound reflection of the social conditions that catalyzed the revolt of enslaved individuals. By situating Turner's life within a sociological framework, scholars can investigate how institutionalized racism, economic disparity, and religious fervor have fueled its motivations and actions. Specifically, the interaction between Turner's deeply rooted spiritual beliefs and the socio-economic context of slavery clarifies the dynamics of the resistance that inspired him and his followers. Turner's belief that he was

chosen to deliver a divine punishment against his oppressors underscores the complex relationship between religion and resistance, a theme that resonates with broader discussions in Black Studies about the role of faith as a liberating force amid systemic oppression.¹

In analyzing Turner's life through the lens of Black Studies, it becomes essential to recognize the implications of his actions in contemporary discussions surrounding identity and Black agency. The sociological exploration of historical figures like Turner is crucial for understanding how their narratives have been constructed, deconstructed, and utilized within broader struggles for social justice. The legacy of Turner's rebellion continues to influence today's conversations regarding empowerment and Black identity, making it vital for scholars to engage with his life and the facets of his challenge. These analyses offer valuable insights into the ongoing struggles against racial oppression and the ongoing pursuit of agency within Black communities.

In addition, the sociological investigation of Turner's experiences highlights the importance of contextualizing the historical resistance acts within struggles and modern movements. By employing theoretical frameworks that encompass not only the breed but also spirituality as a source of resilience, sociologists can foster a deeper understanding of how these historical paradigms shape contemporary evangelization, particularly among young Black individuals. The intersection of faith and activism, as illustrated in passages such as Acts 20:7-12, can inform modern practices of evangelization that resonate with the unique experiences and spiritual needs of today's youth. As such, the exploration of Turner's life through sociology not only enriches our understanding of its historical

¹ Kattie G. Cannon and Anthony B. Pinn, *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 101.

significance but also underscores the enduring relevance of Black Studies in addressing the contemporary challenges faced by Black communities.

The synthesis of Turner's historical narrative with contemporary issues in Black sociology fosters a broad dialogue on resistance, identity, and spirituality. Understanding these connections facilitates a more thorough examination of how historical data can motivate current and future generations to address the ongoing challenges of racial injustice and inequality. By contextualizing Turner's legacy within this sociological framework, scholars can contribute to developing meaningful strategies that empower young Black individuals through authentic and transformative evangelization. Nat Turner was born on October 2, 1800, in Southampton County, Virginia, within a context profoundly shaped by the harsh realities of slavery. His education was significantly influenced by his mother's African heritage and the accompanying oral traditions, as well as the emerging religious currents of the era. Turner was recognized as an early child, believed by his family and community to possess prophetic abilities. This belief, supported by his recurring experiences and religious visions, formed a foundational narrative in Turner's life that connected divinity with his socio-political landscape.²

The African Methodist Episcopal Church served as an essential institutional force for enslaved Black individuals and their descendants, offering a space for spiritual food and collective identity. This denomination not only facilitated involvement with Christianity that emphasized liberation but also reformulated the understanding of Christian doctrine in a way that resonated in the Afro-American experience. Turner's

² Vincent E. Stokes II, *With a Strength Not of His Own: The Christian Background of Rev. Nat Turner and Its Impact on the Black Baptist Church in the 21st Century* (D.Min. diss., Azusa Pacific University, 2016).

religious convictions can be seen as a reflection of this broader movement, in which the church has become a focal point for articulating resistance against enslavement and oppression. In this context, Turner's interpretations of his spiritual visions were not only personal experiences but were also understood as divine mandates that demanded a social and political revolt.

Moreover, the cultural and religious atmosphere of the early nineteenth century was deeply intertwined with abolitionist sentiments and ideologies that challenged the moral legitimacy of slavery. Turner, immersed in this environment, viewed his visions as profound reflections on the personal and collective experiences of Black suffering. The significant expression in Turner's life aligns with the concept of "religious resistance," indicating that the faith embedded in African American communities played a vital role in shaping their socio-political aspirations and desires for liberation.

Turner's narrative is even more contextualized by the broader themes of agency and collective identity that emerged within the sociological frameworks of Black Studies. By deliberating Turner's insurrection through Black Studies lenses, we get information on how religious convictions provide a viable scaffold for social justice movements among marginalized communities. His life serves not only as a historical case study but also as a poignant illustration of the intersections between faith, identity, and activism. Understanding Turner's history enables a more nuanced appreciation of how religious ideologies shape broader social movements, primarily because these concepts continue to resonate today in discussions about spiritual involvement and evangelism among Black young people.

Given these realities, Acts 20:7-12 takes on a deeper significance: beyond their immediate textual interpretation, it symbolizes the themes of community, resurrection, and the rebirth of the theme spirits who resonate with the aspirations of contemporary Blacks involved in religious practices and initiatives of social justice. Thus, analyzing Turner's life within this sociological framework illuminates the potent conjunction of faith and activism that shapes the narrative of Black resistance and resilience across generations. Nat Turner's insurrection, examined within the framework of contemporary Black Studies, opens a transformative discourse on resistance and liberation theology. Central to this analysis are sociological theories that emphasize the power of collective action in response to systemic oppression. Through the perspective of liberation theology, Turner's revolt can be viewed not merely as an act of violence but as a profound, albeit desperate, assertion of agency in a context of dehumanizing slavery. Turner's actions represented a critical response to the circumstances imposed upon him and his enslaved comrades, demonstrating how systemic power structures can ignite organized resistance. His insurrection was not an isolated incident; rather, it reflected broader socio-political currents thriving within the enslaved community, resonating with a collective yearning for freedom and equality.³

The resistance theory further contextualizes Turner's motivations by emphasizing the importance of understanding the socio-historical conditions that shape the actions of marginalized communities. By using resistance theory, academics can analyze how Turner's revolt was not just a result of individual agency but also a product of collective

³ David Gregory Latimore, *Liberating the Neoliberal Black Church: A Theological Response to the Ideological Influence of Neoliberalism on the Black Baptist Church in the 21st Century* (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2020).

trauma and resistance against a system that aimed to erase Black identity. This perspective encourages a critical review of Turner's narrative, reframing him from a mere figure of violence to a symbol of the liberation struggle. In doing so, the analysis highlights the intricate relationship between personal agency and community identity in the face of systemic injustice.

In addition, the intersection of sociology and Black Studies illuminates Turner's role in a broader context of continuous resistance. The sociological examination of his life allows an understanding of the mechanisms through which enslaved individuals mobilized against oppression. This perspective is essential for appreciating how religion played a crucial role in this mobilization. The acts of worship became places of community organization and resistance, where individuals could resort to a shared theological framework to validate their search for freedom. In this sense, Turner's Christian beliefs acted as a catalyst for their revolutionary actions, intertwining the principles of faith with the struggle for emancipation.

Furthermore, examining Turner's life through a sociological perspective enriches our understanding of the implications his actions have for current movements advocating Black liberation. By analyzing Turner within the frameworks of resistance and liberation theology, we can view contemporary social justice movements as part of a continuity of resistance that traces back to figures like Turner. The socio-historical analysis embedded in Black Studies provides essential insights into how these movements can leverage the narrative of resistance to develop effective strategies for change.

To summarize, utilizing sociological theories can help analyze Nat Turner's life and actions, thereby enriching our understanding of Black agency and the power of

collective resistance to systemic oppression. It is through this lens that contemporary academics can appreciate not only the historical significance of Turner's insurrection but also its enduring relevance in today's ongoing struggles for equality and justice within Black communities.

Unpacking the complexities of their experiences contributes to a more nuanced discourse regarding the intersection of faith, identity, and socio-political resistance in the context of Black liberation narratives. The transition from historical analysis to biblical themes, as seen in Acts 20:7-12, offers profound insights into community dynamics, the concept of resurrection, and the theme of empowerment, particularly in how these themes resonate in contemporary discussions surrounding the development of Black young people. The passage reports a specific meeting on Troas, where the early Christians gathered on the first day of the week to break bread, listened to preaching, and shared community worship. This meeting act suggests a fundamental element of the community that becomes an integral part of the support structures necessary for collective resilience and identity formation. Within the context of Black Studies, we can see parallels with community interdependence that historically sustained Black communities, especially during periods of struggle and deprivation of rights.

In verse nine, the narrative presents Eutychus, a young man who falls asleep during Paul's long speech and ultimately falls to his death. This moment can be interpreted metaphorically through the lens of resurrection, an essential theme in Christian theology. Paul's act of reviving Eutychus not only signifies the physical restoration of life but also emphasizes a spiritual rebirth that extends to the larger community. Within the framework of Black Studies, this revival can be paralleled with

resilience stories among Black men, who often navigate systemic obstacles and social death due to marginalization but find ways to regain vitality through communal ties and shared faith.⁴

The implications of the resurrection in this passage also resonate with the process of empowerment among young Black people in contemporary contexts. Community responsibility to nourish growth and transformation is evident. As verse twelve states, “They took young people alive and were not a little comforted.” This image fosters a discussion on guidance and support mechanisms, key components in youth empowerment. Just as early Christians worked in collaboration to raise members of their community, contemporary social structures should recognize the importance of promoting an environment conducive to the growth and empowerment of Black youth.

Moreover, the act of preaching, as highlighted in Acts 20:7, serves as a vital channel for spiritual nourishment. It emphasizes the importance of voice, narrative, and the power to tell stories within Black cultural contexts. Preaching, in this sense, transcends mere verbal communication; it becomes an act of resistance and recovery, channeling experiences of struggle into a collective narrative that fosters agency and purpose. The responsibility to pursue spiritual growth is especially crucial when considering the socio-economic and cultural challenges faced by young Black individuals today.

In analyzing this passage through a sociological lens, we discover layers of meaning that contribute to discussions about evangelistic strategies for Black young people. The act of gathering serves not only as a community necessity but also as an

⁴ Smith, *Unreconciled*, 261-262.

invitation to create safe spaces where speech, orientation, and empowerment can flourish. The themes of community, resurrection, and empowerment in Acts 20:7-12, therefore, resonate deeply in the contemporary landscape of Black Studies and ecclesiastical practices, forging a way for an intentional approach to evangelism that seeks to raise and encourage marginalized voices. The interaction of these dynamics amplifies the potential for transforming engagement in religious and sociological structures, revealing the importance of understanding historical struggles and sacred narratives in shaping individuals today. Acts 20:7-12 presents deep themes that can be contextualized to develop a modern framework for evangelism among Black young people, particularly in urban environments characterized by displacement and identity struggles. This passage reports a meeting of early Christians who gathered to hear Paul's teachings, culminating in a resurrection community act after an almost fatal incident involving Eutychus. This representation reflects not only a united community in the pursuit of spiritual understanding but also emphasizes the importance of communion and support in combating existential crises faced by marginalized groups. In contemporary urban contexts, young Black people often navigate a multifaceted landscape of socioeconomic challenges, systemic injustices, and identity conflicts.⁵ These same themes illustrated in Acts provide a tangible structure to address these concerns.

The emphasis on community interaction and the exchange of teachings that give life highlights the need for holistic engagement in evangelism efforts. Young Black individuals often experience isolation, worsened by social narratives that dehumanize them and perpetuate cycles of violence and despair. Acts 20:7-12 calls for a reevaluation

⁵ Deirdre Jonese Austin, *Caring for 'The Least of These': An Analysis of Social Justice Activism in the Black Church in the Twenty-First Century* (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2019).

of evangelistic practices, establishing a model that prioritizes the building of relationships, orientation, and community resilience. This engagement can foster a sense of belonging and purpose, combating harmful stereotypes and offering pathways to spiritual and personal growth. The community's collective experience in meeting the spiritual and physical needs of its members underscores the significance of creating safe spaces where young Black individuals can feel valued, understood, and engaged.

Moreover, the themes of perseverance and renewal present in the text resonate deeply with the struggle for identity among young Black individuals, who often face external pressures that hinder their self-esteem and aspirations. Eutychus's resurrection serves as a metaphor for hope and redemption, emphasizing that even in times of despair, revitalization is possible through collective moral and spiritual support. In this way, evangelism efforts can be grounded in the narrative of the resurrection, encouraging young Black people to view their experiences, no matter how challenging, as opportunities for growth and transformation.

By framing evangelism through the lens of Acts 20:7-12, churches and organizations can foster environments that not only promote faith but also encourage dialogue around issues of race, identity, and purpose. Involving young Black individuals in discussions that connect their lived experiences to the teachings of Scripture can create a deeper contextual relevance and stimulate interest in faith practices. This integrated approach emphasizes the intersectionality of faith and identity, suggesting that the quest for spiritual meaning can be both a personal and collective endeavor.

In short, community dynamics and the themes of perseverance encapsulated in Acts 20:7-12 emphasize a possible evangelistic structure that resonates with the

contemporary struggles of young Black people. By leveraging community support, lessons, renewal, and affirmation of identity, modern evangelism can mobilize and enable this demography by providing significant paths to faith that align with their lived experiences. This paradigm shift is crucial to meeting the urgent need for holistic approaches to evangelism that reflect the complexities of identity in urban environments. By examining the implications of Acts 20:7-12 on evangelistic efforts intended for young Black people, it is essential to recognize the context in which these dimensions of scripture interact with the sociocultural realities of the Black community. Acts 20:7-12 narrates an event that highlights the communal and resistant aspects of the early church. These elements resonate deeply within the tradition of the Black Church, especially regarding the socialization of Black young people in a society that often marginalizes their voices and experiences. The story of Eutychus, who falls into a deep sleep during a sermon but is miraculously revived by Paul, can be metaphorically interpreted to reflect the awakening and revitalization of Black young people who face the challenges of spiritual lethargy amidst social struggles.

The first theme arises from the significance of community meetings, as expressed in this passage. In a modern context, the Black Church serves as a cultural refuge where young Black individuals can discover their identity and purpose. This reflects the idea that the church can function not only as a spiritual sanctuary but also as a platform for social activism, addressing the endemic issues of racial injustice and systemic oppression that disproportionately impact Black men.⁶ By leveraging the community elements highlighted in Acts 20:7-12, church leaders can create evangelistic initiatives that

⁶ Shandell Maxwell, *Religious Racial Socialization: The Approach of a Black Pastor at a Historic Black Baptist Church in Orange County, California* (PhD diss., Antioch University, 2020).

promote a sense of belonging and encourage Blacks to get involved with faith and activism. The recognition that community support is a vital component of faith formation is significant for enhancing the participation of this demographic in church activities.

Another theme within Acts 20:7-12 is Paul's resistance in preaching and the congregation's listening. This notion of perseverance resonates with the historical and continuous struggles faced by Black men in America. Recognizing your challenges and affirming your experiences is essential to establishing authentic connections during evangelistic efforts. By aligning the narrative of the scriptures of persistence with the lived experiences of young Black people, church leaders can cultivate an environment that validates their struggles. At the same time, it simultaneously clarifies ways to hope through spiritual engagement. This dynamic structure enables a reimagination of narratives associated with faith—a notion that faith can lead to empowerment and collective resilience, rather than just individual salvation.

Moreover, the theme of the miraculous Renaissance, as exemplified in the resurrection of Eutychus, holds significant implications for evangelism. It acts as a metaphor for revitalization within the community. This can be particularly appealing for conveying messages of transformation and restoration to young Black individuals who may feel disappointed or disconnected from mainstream religious practices. By incorporating these themes in sermons and community outreach initiatives, the Church can deliver a message of renewal that is persuasive and impactful. This is crucial for challenging negative stereotypes often associated with young Black men and fostering a narrative that highlights their potential and contributions to faith and society.

In short, the use of the themes of Acts 20:7-12 presents an opportunity to create an evangelistic approach that is deeply rooted in the experiences of young Black people. In emphasizing the community, perseverance, and the promise of renewal, the Church can play a transforming role in enabling this demography, challenging the narratives of society as they enrich their spiritual journeys. This approach requires a commitment to the faithfulness of scripture and sociocultural relevance, thus ensuring that the Black Church serves as a proactive agent of change in the lives of Black young people. An examination of Nat Turner's legacy within the Black Church reveals essential connections between historical resistance and contemporary activism based on faith among young Blacks. Turner, who directed a significant rebellion against the institution of slavery in 1831, resonates powerfully within the stories preserved in the Black Church. His actions were not merely violent uprisings but were deeply rooted in a theological framework that emphasized liberation and justice, a theology that fundamentally follows the difficult situation of today's African Americans. Turner's integration of religious conviction and activism served as a precursor to modern movements within the Church, such as Black Lives Matter and other initiatives oriented to justice.⁷

The revivalist fervor that characterized Turner's religious experiences underscores a broader pattern of spiritual resistance woven into the fabric of Black evangelicalism. This historical context offers a perspective for young Blacks to explore their identities and roles within their communities. Within the Church, the figures of past martyrs and religious leaders serve as a template to challenge oppression and advocate for social

⁷ Troy Denson, *Reframing Urban Black Historic Church Leadership's View of the Mission of God: Increasing African American Legacy Congregations' Relevance for Effectively Ministering in Their Changing Communities of the Twenty-First Century* (PhD diss. Howard University, 2021).

justice, tasks that young Blacks view as a divine mandate. By invoking Turner's legacy, contemporary church leaders are creating spaces for dialogue and reflection on the intersections of faith, virility, and activism, emphasizing that spiritual commitment must coincide with social transformation.

In addition, community worship practices traditionally associated with the Black Church emphasize not only resilience but also the active search for liberation, framing evangelism as inherently linked to social action. The stories of faith and resistance, such as those of Nat Turner, inspire the current congregants to interact with their surroundings in an informed and impressive way. Professionals within the space of the communities of the Black Church use Turner's narrative as a source of motivation, reaffirming the sacred duty to advocate justice as a continuation of the historical struggle.

Turner's legacy also serves as a warning story that shapes the ethical framework guiding contemporary evangelism. It includes critical evaluations of church practices, urging young Black individuals to reflect on the implications of their faith in contexts characterized by systemic injustice. The intersection of the revolt and Turner's challenges in Acts 20:7-12 also encourages the exploration of how concepts of resurrection and renewal—a consistent theme in evangelical practices—can inspire political and social revitalization movements among young Black people today.

When young Black individuals draw upon their cultural and religious heritage, they confront the dual challenges of personal spiritual growth and public social responsibility. This engagement in activism within a religious framework reflects Turner's belief that faith is intertwined with the struggle for dignity and human rights. When delineating the intergenerational impacts of Turner's actions on current evangelism

efforts, it becomes evident that adopting resistance against social injustices not only enriches individual faith trips but also reaffirms the community struggle for liberation, empowering future generations to articulate a different voice based on both spirituality and activism. The legacy of Nat Turner, who led a significant rebellion of slaves in 1831, provides critical insights into the lasting struggles faced today by young Blacks. Turner's revolt is emblematic of the resistance against systemic oppression, and an analysis of his life in the framework of Black Studies in sociology highlights the historical and ongoing barriers that inform the contemporary experiences of Black youth, concerning faith and spiritual commitment. This section aims to contextualize Turner's revolt alongside the current socio-economic and cultural challenges that, ironically, echo his era, where systemic racism continues to obstruct pathways toward effective evangelization.

Today's barriers to evangelization among Black young people stem from the multifaceted and incomplete issues of race, class, and social inequalities that are deeply intertwined within American society. Current sociological studies highlight how systemic inequalities, rooted in centuries of discrimination, manifest in various sectors, impacting education, employment opportunities, and overall social mobility.⁸ Black individuals, disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system and facing significant economic disadvantages, often find themselves in environments that may seem inhospitable to spiritual and community involvement. As these young people navigate their realities, the reasons for committing themselves to faith communities must be critically assessed against a backdrop of structural limits that can foster distrust and disenchantment with religious institutions.

⁸ Daniel White Hodge, *No Church in the Wild* (Wilore, KY: First Fruits Press, 2019), 38.

Furthermore, the contemporary acts of violence, both at the interpersonal and systemic levels, such as the brutality of the police, resonate with the context of Turner's rebellion, highlighting a persistent narrative of resistance against dehumanization. The young Blacks, surrounded by an environment of violence and systemic negligence, can question the role of faith in their life when many religious teachings remain unresponsive to their lived experiences.⁹ The relevance of Acts 20:7-12 within this framework cannot be overrated. The themes of the resurrection and renewal found in the passage can serve as a moving appeal to empowerment, but the translation of these spiritual principles in daily reality remains full of obstacles.

Religious institutions have historically served as a sanctuary for marginalized groups, but they must navigate a delicate balance between providing hope and dealing with the tangible realities of oppression. The perceptions of these institutions by younger Black men are often filtered through the lenses of historical betrayal and exclusion, in which the communities of faith may have aligned more with the systemic power structures than with the liberating narrative exemplified by figures such as Turner. Recognizing these dynamics is essential for effective evangelization, which must be a priority to build authentic relationships and understanding the specific barriers that young Blacks face.¹⁰

Sociologically, this suggests that evangelization strategies should adapt to include a robust understanding of the struggles against systemic racism while fostering a sense of community solidarity. Involving community leaders, tutoring programs, and

⁹ Hodge, *No Church in the Wild*, 31.

¹⁰ Hodge, *No Church in the Wild*, 35.

empowerment initiatives that connect spiritual growth with practical life skills can help bridge the gap between faith and the experiences of young Black individuals.

Furthermore, integrating critical race theories into religious dialogues can enhance our understanding of how faith intersects with race and class, creating spaces that resonate more profoundly with younger generations.

In this light, the sociological exploration of the Black identity, modeled by both historical struggles and current challenges, makes a nuanced understanding of the implications of evangelization. This exploration accentuates the need for a relational approach that not only faces the physical needs but also nourishes the spiritual aspirations of the young Blacks, a company that remains significant today as during the rebellious support of Nat Turner against an oppressive system. The integration of Black Studies in the analysis of sociological issues surrounding Nat Turner's life and the biblical text of Acts 20:7-12 allows a nuanced examination of social justice as a critical component of evangelism, particularly concerning young Blacks. Black Studies, as an interdisciplinary field, clarifies the intersections of race, the dynamics of power, and the historical context, which are essential to understand how these factors shape religious beliefs and practices within the Black community. By using an entrenched framework in Black Studies, academics and professionals can analyze the socio-political awareness of young Blacks, producing ideas about how their experiences lived report their commitment to faith and community initiatives.

The center of Nat Turner's narration is the historical struggle against oppression, rooted in the brutal realities of slavery and the fight for autonomy. Turner's rebellion is not just a historical event; it symbolizes a broader resistance against systemic injustice.

This dynamic resonates with contemporary issues explored in Acts 20:7-12, particularly the emphasis on communal gatherings and the exchange of spiritual support. In this biblical passage, the act of breaking the bread symbolizes not only a ritualistic meeting but also serves as an ecclesiological metaphor for solidarity and collective strength within marginalized communities. Turner's quest for spiritual liberation parallels the urgent need for young Black individuals today to reshape their commitment to faith in ways that advocate for social justice.

Participating in faith through a socio-political lens is essential for young Black individuals, who often navigate a complex interplay of identity, race, and spirituality. This commitment raises the question of how these young people view their roles within their communities and the larger social context. Racial issues and systemic inequalities influence how faith is expressed and experienced, as young Black individuals grapple with historical and contemporary injustices. Promoting socio-political awareness through Black Studies can foster a transformative exploration of faith practices, encouraging young people to connect their beliefs to justice-based activism.

In addition, the integration of Black Studies exposes the implicit values present in religious texts, such as Acts 20:7-12, which illuminate the importance of community participation and elevation. For example, Paul's act of preaching until midnight in the passage symbolizes a commitment to community education and empowerment. This shows that evangelism transcends mere spiritual conversion. It covers the activism that seeks to address social disparities and advocate for the welfare of the community. Consequently, the implications for evangelism among young Blacks are deep; they are

not simply receptors of a religious message but are positioned as agents of change, equipped with the socio-political awareness necessary to challenge systemic injustices.

By placing their faith in a framework of social justice, young Blacks can forge deeper connections with their communities, participating in dialogues that emphasize empowerment and resistance. The intersections of Black Studies, sociology, and biblical interpretation collectively foster environments that encourage spiritual growth and activist commitment, cultivating a generation prepared to make a significant social transformation. In this landscape evolving, the traditional paradigms of evangelism must adapt to cover the complex realities experienced by young Blacks, ensuring that faith becomes a catalyst not only for personal transformation but also for collective liberation. By exploring the multiple facets of the heritage of Nat Turner, biblical account and contemporary evangelization, this survey highlights the imperative so that the institutions are addressed to the historical and socio-cultural contexts which shape the lives of young Black men today. By incorporating Black Studies into sociology, it elucidates the historical significance of Turner as not only a figure of rebellion but also as an embodiment of the quest for freedom and dignity within oppressive structures. His insurgency symbolizes a broader story that criticizes systemic injustices and defends liberative theology—a central theme in his life and the biblical narrative analyzed in Acts 20:7-12.¹¹

Acts 20:7-12 presents pivotal themes of community, resurrection, and the transformative power of faith. The story recounts an event in which the Apostle Paul's

¹¹ Almeda M. Wright, *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017), 10-11.

prolonged preaching leads to the resuscitation of Eutychus, symbolizing hope and new beginnings in the face of death. This miracle can be interpreted through a socio-cultural lens, resonating with intrinsic concerns facing young Black men, particularly the struggles against societal death, represented by marginalization, violence, and poverty. The theme of resurrection, derived from the text, contrasts strongly with historical narratives of priority and despair, serving both as an assurance of spiritual renewal and a call to activism.

By integrating Turner's challenge against slavery and the promise of Acts 20:7-12, this project posits that evangelization intended for young Black men must not only address their spiritual needs but also confront the socio-political realities with which they are confronted.¹² Theological implications extend to an appeal to the Church to become an ally in the fight against systemic oppression and defend holistic empowerment. The accounts of wrestling and resilience shared within the Black Community are used to motivate these young men towards a holistic faith that encourages social commitment and activism, offering a framework where spirituality meets social justice.

Furthermore, the convergence of Black Studies and theological reflection highlights how historical narratives can inform contemporary faith practices. Engaging with the history of Nat Turner within the context of these actions also necessitates an understanding of the community's role in shaping religious identities. Therefore, the Church is not only a space for spiritual teaching but also a stronghold for social transformation, advocating for justice, equity, and the empowerment of young Black men. This awareness demands a renewal of evangelization strategies that

¹² Wright, *The Spiritual Lives of Young African Americans*, 155.

prioritize dialogue on liberation theology while actively combating the conditions that foster despair.

The results of this research suggest that genuine evangelization among young Black men requires an integrated approach—one that intertwines the rich historical tapestry, much like Nat Turner, with biblical transformative accounts to foster a faith that is both empowering and liberating. By embracing both the lessons of history and the teachings of scripture, the Church can reclaim its rightful role as a leader in the pursuit of social justice, tirelessly advocating for the upliftment of young Black men who navigate a world that presents challenges but is also rich in heritage and potential. The synthesis of these narratives compels a response from the modern church that is both theologically sound and contextually relevant, ensuring that the dignity and future of young Black men remain central to evangelical efforts.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The "Who Am I" research project emerged from a profound need within the Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church in Southeast Washington, D.C., to bridge the cultural and generational divide between the church and young African American men in the surrounding community. This post-project analysis aims to examine the outcomes of a six-week training initiative designed to equip African American male leaders to evangelize more effectively by integrating relational evangelism with a historically accurate understanding of Christianity's African roots.

Situated in Ward Eight, a context marked by systemic challenges yet rich in cultural resilience, the project responded to a disconnection between church and community by reimagining evangelism as relationship-centered and culturally contextual. It posited that when African American men are introduced to a Christianity that honors their heritage, they can more authentically and confidently share their faith. This approach shifts the focus of evangelism from doctrinal memorization and programmatic outreach to identity formation, historical awareness, and interpersonal engagement.

The synergy between the project's goals and the ministerial context is rooted in the identity and evolution of Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church. Founded on principles of progressive theology and community empowerment, the church finds itself

at a crucial intersection—maintaining theological integrity while reengaging a largely absent demographic: young Black men. This project emerged not merely as a scholarly exercise but as an extension of a deeply personal ministry journey shaped by generational mentorship, Black theological exploration, and firsthand experiences navigating Black male identity in both secular and sacred spheres.

The synergy also resides in the alignment of personal passion with the church's mission. Through ministry experiences, academic preparation, and exposure to Black male mentorship in church and professional settings, the project leader was able to model the very type of relational engagement being taught. This allowed the training not only to be conceptual but also incarnational; participants were not only taught principles but also witnessed them embodied. By focusing on relational evangelism rooted in cultural memory and personal narrative, the project forged bridges between theology and lived experience.

The church, while rich in history and commitment, faced clear challenges: outdated evangelistic approaches, an aging female-majority membership, and disengagement from the young male population in its community. The synergy section of the original proposal highlighted that relational evangelism, with its roots in the Black Church's tradition of mentorship, social action, and communal resilience, offered a timely and theologically grounded remedy.

One of the defining features of this project was its intentional integration of interdisciplinary knowledge—historical, biblical, theological, and sociocultural—into practical ministry training. Each week of the six-week curriculum builds upon the last,

starting with the foundations of evangelism and culminating in the development of practical relational skills contextualized for the modern African American male experience.

Participants were introduced to Africa's presence in biblical stories, the contributions of Africans in early church history, and the role of Black leaders in American Christianity. This education was not just trivia but a form of empowerment. As participants began to see themselves in the Christian narrative, their ability to express their faith in culturally meaningful ways grew. Journaling, group discussions, and interviews helped participants internalize and personalize their learning, preparing them to apply this knowledge in real-world relational situations.

Integration also involved creating space for vulnerability and story-sharing—key ingredients in relational evangelism. Instead of offering a sanitized or rigid version of Christianity, participants were encouraged to reflect on their journeys of faith, doubt, identity, and resilience. This methodology affirmed that evangelism is not only about proclamation but incarnation—embodying the message in everyday relationships.

The training cultivated a model of culturally-grounded, biblically-faithful evangelism that is replicable and scalable. It demonstrated that theological education, when merged with community insight and personal testimony, equips leaders to become transformational agents both within and beyond the church. The integration of these elements marked a paradigm shift in how Greater Fellowship approaches outreach and discipleship.

This post-project analysis will explore the measured outcomes of the training, examine qualitative insights from participants, and assess the ongoing impact of

integrating relational evangelism with Afrocentric theological education. While data and reflections will follow, the synergy and integration that framed this project offer a compelling model for other churches seeking to reach young Black men with authenticity, relevance, and hope. The following sections of this analysis will detail these findings, evaluate the project's effectiveness, and propose directions for future implementation and research.

Methodology

This project utilized a qualitative approach to gather data to measure growth and engagement among participants. Data was collected using pre- and post-project questionnaires, which were administered at the beginning and end of the six-week training period. These questionnaires consisted of open-ended questions designed to assess participants' biblical knowledge, perceptions of Christianity's cultural context, and comfort level with evangelism.

Additionally, data were collected through individual interviews, weekly journaling assignments, and structured group discussions. Interviews were conducted at the conclusion of the project, allowing participants to reflect in depth on their experiences throughout the training. This method enabled me to assess not only changes in knowledge but also changes in self-perception, spiritual confidence, and relational skills.

Participants were also required to keep a weekly journal in which they responded to targeted prompts related to the session's material. These journals served as a tool for personal reflection and as a crucial data source for evaluating participant growth. Each

journal entry offered insight into how participants internalized and processed information, as well as how they planned to apply it in real-world contexts.

Group discussions were conducted at the end of each session and lasted approximately fifteen minutes. These discussions created a communal space for participants to share their thoughts, ask questions, and support one another on their faith journeys. This dialogue proved invaluable for understanding the collective experience of the group and for reinforcing the relational aspect of the evangelism model.

All Zoom sessions and interviews were recorded with permission to facilitate later review and analysis. This recording practice ensured accuracy in data capture and allowed specific moments of engagement or uncertainty to be revisited. It also offered a way to reflect on participants' body language and tone, adding an additional layer of depth to the qualitative analysis.

Participants were selected through a collaborative effort with the Senior Pastor of Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church. The goal was to recruit African American men who were active in the church and showed interest in leadership or spiritual development. This project sought to engage men who would benefit from enhanced theological knowledge and practical evangelism tools, and who could serve as future leaders in community outreach.

Initial names were compiled based on observations, leadership potential, and recommendations from pastoral and lay leadership within the congregation. These men were contacted personally and invited to participate in the training program. Each was given a detailed explanation of the project goals, weekly expectations, and time commitments to ensure informed consent.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Those who agreed to join the program completed a Participant Agreement Form and were issued a journal to use throughout the project's duration. In total, six men enrolled and consistently participated, representing a diverse range of life experiences, ages, and theological perspectives.

The main goal of the project was to foster personal and spiritual growth in participants through a relational evangelism approach. This approach emphasizes relationship building, cultural understanding, and theological confidence rather than fixed evangelism techniques. The content was presented over six organized weeks via Zoom, with each session covering a key aspect of culturally sensitive evangelism.

Each session was approximately one hour in length and began with a core teaching component, followed by a group discussion and the introduction of that week's journal prompt. The sessions unfolded as follows:

Week One - March 1, 2025: What is Evangelism?

Week Two - March 8, 2025: Africa and Africans in the Bible

Week Three - March 22, 2025: Africans in the Early Church

Week Four - March 29, 2025: African Americans in Modern Church History

Week Five - April 5, 2025: Overcoming Modern-Day Objections

Week Six - April 12, 2025: Practicing Relational Evangelism

The curriculum combined historical content with practical theology, allowing participants to situate their faith within a broader cultural and spiritual context. The aim was to help them see themselves not only as Christians but as descendants of a legacy of African spiritual leadership. This empowered them to articulate their faith as something authentic and relevant to their identity as Black men.

To promote transformation, participants were encouraged to engage with each topic on an emotional, spiritual, and intellectual level. Storytelling and testimony were central components of this process, allowing participants to make connections between the training content and their lived experiences. This engagement fostered not only information retention but deep personal reflection and growth.

The relational nature of the training meant that learning did not stop at the theoretical level but was reinforced through dialogue and shared community. Participants were encouraged to challenge common misconceptions, such as Christianity being a ‘White man’s religion,’ and replace them with historically grounded, theologically sound responses. Through this, they were prepared not only to witness but to mentor others, thus multiplying the project’s impact within their personal circles and communities.

Implementation

The participants in this project consisted of six African American male members of Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church. Ages ranged from thirty-two to sixty-one, representing a cross-generational group that brought varied perspectives and life experiences. All participants identified as Christian and had some level of involvement in church ministry or leadership. Educational backgrounds varied, with two holding high school diplomas, three having some college or trade education, two holding bachelor’s degrees, and one possessing a graduate degree. This diversity of age and educational experience enriched group discussions, allowing for both emerging voices and seasoned perspectives to influence the learning environment. Participants were selected for their potential to lead future evangelism efforts within the church and community. Each man

brought with him not only his faith journey but also a desire to be equipped to minister to younger African American men who may feel disconnected from the Christian faith.

Prior to the project's official launch, each participant was provided with a physical journal and a questionnaire designed to assess their initial understanding of evangelism and cultural awareness. These materials were labeled with participant numbers one through six and handed out individually. Senior Pastor Carey E. Pointer, Jr., collected journals and questionnaires at the conclusion of the project. Additionally, individual interviews were conducted on Monday, April 13, using structured questions outlined in the project proposal section of the original research document.

Week One - March 1, 2025: What is Evangelism? – Titled “Sharing the Message: Understanding Evangelism,” this workshop introduced participants to foundational concepts of evangelism. The session began with an interactive introduction that asked, “What comes to mind when you hear evangelism?” followed by a twenty-five-minute teaching on biblical definitions, personal faith, and key scriptures such as Matthew 28:19-20. Participants discussed various evangelism methods and completed a journal reflection on their effectiveness in sharing their faith. This session established a theological and practical framework for relational evangelism. It also encouraged participants to examine their motivations and readiness to share their faith with others within and beyond their community.

Week Two - March 8, 2025: Africa and Africans in the Bible – This session, titled “Biblical Blackness: Africans in the Bible,” sought to restore historical context and address misconceptions about African identity in the Bible. Teaching content focused on

key African figures and regions, including Cush, Zipporah, Egypt, and Simon of Cyrene, with Scripture studies from Acts, Exodus, Kings, and the Gospels. The session concluded with a reflection on the importance of connecting one's ethnic and cultural identity with faith, helping participants to reclaim a heritage often overlooked in mainstream Christian teaching. The journal prompt for this session asked participants to explore why understanding their biblical heritage matters in their spiritual walk and evangelism practice.

Week Three - March 22, 2025: Africans in the Early Church – Under the title “Founders of the Faith: Africans in Early Christianity,” this workshop explored the role of African leaders in shaping Christian theology. Figures such as Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, and Augustine were examined, with emphasis on their theological writings and influence on early doctrine. An opening icebreaker around the phrase “Africa and Christianity” led to robust dialogue on how this reclaimed knowledge can embolden Black men to witness with greater authority and confidence. Participants responded to journal prompts that asked them to reflect on how their perspectives on evangelism had changed, considering that Africans had played a significant role in building the foundation of the Church.

Week Four - March 29, 2025: The Black Church in America – Titled “The Black Church: A Legacy of Faith and Resistance,” this session traced the historical development of the Black Church from slavery to the Civil Rights era. Key figures such as Richard Allen, Sojourner Truth, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others were used to illustrate the church's dual role as both a spiritual and socio-political institution. Participants reflected on their own spiritual boldness and were challenged to see

themselves as the next generation of courageous witnesses in a tradition of resistance and hope. A journaling exercise encouraged them to consider how they might carry the torch of justice and witness in today's climate.

Week Five - April 5, 2025: Overcoming Modern-Day Objections – In

“Responding with Truth: Overcoming Objections,” participants were equipped to address frequent critiques of Christianity, including claims of hypocrisy and colonialism. The session used biblical and historical responses—such as the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts and leaders like Nat Turner—to model how truth and empathy can be effective tools in conversation. Group dialogue allowed for role-playing difficult interactions, and journaling prompted self-assessment of how each participant might respond when faith is challenged. The session deepened understanding of how cultural and historical literacy can reinforce one's witness in skeptical environments.

Week Six - April 12, 2025: Practicing Relational Evangelism – Titled “The Power of Connection: Relational Evangelism,” the final workshop synthesized learning through practical application. Teaching segments emphasized empathy, authenticity, and active listening, followed by scenarios for participants to practice initiating spiritual conversations. Participants were assigned a follow-up challenge to reach out to three to five individuals in their lives to begin relational engagement, closing the session with prayer and journal collection. This session served as both a culmination and a launching point, reinforcing the conviction that relational evangelism is a lived expression of faith.

Lesson Plans

Week One – What is Evangelism?

The title for the first session was “Sharing the Message: Understanding Evangelism” on March 1, 2025. The session lasted for sixty minutes. The audience consisted of Black men preparing for relational evangelism. The session was held on Zoom.

The objectives were to define evangelism and its importance in the Christian faith, explore different methods of evangelism, and encourage participants to reflect on their approach to sharing their faith. The materials used consisted of a projector, slides, journals, pens, and Bibles. The outline consisted of an introduction for ten minutes on the topic “What comes to mind when you hear evangelism?” There was a twenty-five-minute teaching segment on “What is evangelism?”. There was a key scripture and information on evangelism in personal faith. There was a fifteen-minute discussion of “Effective Methods of Evangelism,” followed by a ten-minute journal prompt on the topic “Have I been an effective evangelist? Why or why not?” The session closed with a five-minute summary and prayer.

Week Two – Africa and Africans in the Bible

The title of session two was “Biblical Blackness: Africans in the Bible,” which was held on March 8, 2025. The objectives were to: identify African regions and people in the Bible; explore their roles in biblical history; and connect this legacy to modern faith and identity.

The outline consisted of teaching for thirty minutes, exploring Cush, Zipporah, Queen of Sheba, Egypt, and Simon of Cyrene. There was a fifteen-minute Scripture study, which reflected passages from Acts, Kings, Exodus, and the Gospels. The application discussion focused on why this matters today for approximately ten minutes. The journal prompt was, “Why is it important for me to know about Africans in the Bible?” The closing consisted of prayer and group reflection.

Week Three – Africans in the Early Church

The title of the third session was “Founders of the Faith: Africans in Early Christianity,” on March 22, 2025. The objectives were to understand the contributions of African leaders to early Christianity and to highlight figures like Augustine, Cyprian, Tertullian, and the Council of Nicaea.

The outline consisted of an icebreaker word association on Africa and Christianity. Followed by a thirty-minute teaching segment on “Lives and Theology of Major African Fathers.” There was a fifteen-minute discussion reflecting on how this knowledge affects our witness. The journal prompt for the week was, “How do I feel knowing Africans helped establish the Church?” There was a ten-minute summary and prayer.

Week Four – The Black Church in America

The title for session four was, “The Black Church: A Legacy of Faith and Resistance,” held on March 29, 2025. The objectives were to trace the Black Church’s

role throughout U.S. history, reflect on the bold witnesses of past generations, and inspire contemporary evangelistic courage.

The outline for the session consisted of an icebreaker discussing, “What do you think of when you hear ‘Black Church’?” A historical overview of slavery, Jim Crow laws, the Civil Rights Movement, and their modern impact was provided. The question “Would I be a bolder witness back then?” prompted a group discussion. There was a journal prompt and wrap-up with a closing prayer.

Week Five – Overcoming Objections

The title was, “Responding with Truth: Overcoming Objections,” held on April 5, 2025. The objectives were to understand common objections to Christianity, use history and scripture to respond effectively, and to reflect on one’s own answers to tough questions.

The outline addressed teaching objectives like the “Christianity is a White man’s religion,” hypocrisy, and related topics, as well as biblical and historical responses: Ethiopia, Council of Nicaea, and Nat Turner. There was a group dialogue focused on how to respond with truth and grace. The journal prompt focused on “How do I respond to ‘Christianity is a White man’s religion’?” The session ended with a closing prayer.

Week Six – Relational Evangelism

The title was, “The Power of Connection: Relational Evangelism,” held on April 12, 2025. The objectives were to define relational evangelism, practice active listening, empathy, and authenticity, and to engage others naturally in spiritual conversation.

The outline consisted of a lesson on “What is Relational Evangelism and Why it Matters.” The components consisted of authenticity, listening, and empathy. The practices that evolved from the discussion were strategies and scenarios. The participants were assigned homework by reaching out to three to five individuals and asking questions, reflecting, and following up. The journals were collected, and a closing prayer was extended.

Summary of Learning

Six gentlemen from the membership of Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church made up the core of participants for this project. All these men are engaged in Ministry within the church and include Ministers, Musicians, Finance, Bible Study, small group leaders, and Food Bank volunteers. With this diverse group, this project has a solid representation of the context.

The undermentioned material is a synopsis of the data amassed from the six-week workshop training held via Zoom, sponsored by the Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church. Participants submitted journal prompts, pre- and post-questionnaires about evangelism and the role of people of African descent in the church, and their experience, in our context. Participants were encouraged to complete each task in detail. Attendance was inconsistent, with only two sessions achieving full attendance; however, each workshop was marked by engagement, positivity, and energy. Journal responses were also inconsistent, but individual interviews and observations were key in gathering data.

Pre-Project Questionnaire Responses

1. What is evangelism? This question was designed to gauge the participant's knowledge of the project's theological foundation. Most participants defined evangelism as "sharing the gospel" or "telling others about Jesus." A few offered more theological interpretations, referencing the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19–20) or describing evangelism as a divine mandate for all believers. Overall, the group demonstrated a foundational understanding of the biblical roots of evangelism, although some members lacked a deeper theological vocabulary.

2. What is relational evangelism? This question was designed to gauge the participant's knowledge of the project's theological foundation. While the term "relational evangelism" was unfamiliar to most participants, they resonated with the concept once it was explained. Participants associated it with "building trust," "being authentic," and "showing Christ through your lifestyle." One participant described it as "reaching people through relationship rather than just preaching," showing an intuitive grasp of its meaning even without prior exposure to the terminology.

3. Do you consider yourself an evangelist? This question was designed to gauge how each participant views himself regarding sharing the gospel. Responses were mixed. Two participants identified themselves as evangelists, citing personal outreach experiences. Three others were hesitant, suggesting they did not feel qualified due to a lack of training or confidence. One participant explicitly stated he did not consider himself an evangelist, reflecting a common concern about the perceived requirements or expectations of the role.

4. Describe your comfort level in sharing the gospel with strangers. This question was designed to assess whether the participant has any history of witnessing. Comfort levels varied significantly. Two participants expressed that they were “somewhat comfortable,” typically preferring familiar or informal settings. Three participants indicated discomfort or uncertainty, particularly in public or confrontational situations. One participant reported feeling “very comfortable” and viewed gospel-sharing as a regular part of his interactions, regardless of the setting.

5. Do you agree with the statement that Christianity is the “White Man’s religion?” This question was designed to determine if the participant agrees with the flawed view that the project seeks to address. All six participants disagreed with this statement. However, their explanations revealed different levels of conviction. Some acknowledged the weaponization of Christianity during slavery and colonization but differentiated that from the faith’s true message and origins. Most expressed a desire to reclaim the African identity within Christianity and reject the narrative of cultural disinheritance.

6. Please explain your answer to the previous question. This question was designed to require the participant to explain their thought process behind the answer to question five. Participants who rejected the notion that Christianity is the “White Man’s religion” often drew on personal experiences, theological knowledge, or historical insights. One participant emphasized, “Christianity was in Africa long before slavery,” while another stated, “Jesus was not European.” These reflections indicated an emerging awareness of Christianity’s African heritage and a readiness to address and correct historical misconceptions.

7. Can you name any Africans in Scripture? This question was designed to determine if the participant has any prior knowledge of the subject discussed in week two. Only two participants could name specific Africans in the Bible, such as Simon of Cyrene or the Ethiopian eunuch. The remaining participants were unsure or could not recall specific names. This highlighted a general lack of familiarity with the African presence in the biblical narrative, which was directly addressed in the second week of the project.

8. Can you name any Africans in the Early Church? None of the participants could name Africans in the Early Church, such as Tertullian, Origen, or Augustine. Several admitted they had never been taught about the contributions of African Church Fathers. This response reinforced the necessity of the Week Three session, which focused on recovering historical memory within the Christian tradition.

9. Who is Nat Turner? This question was designed to determine if the participant has any prior knowledge of the subject discussed in week four. Four participants correctly identified Nat Turner as a Black preacher who led a slave rebellion in 1831. Two participants were either unsure or gave vague responses. The varied responses reflected differing levels of exposure to Black liberation figures in Christian history. The session on Black resistance provided deeper context for this legacy.

10. What was Jim Crow? This question was designed to determine if the participant had any prior knowledge of the subject discussed in week four. All six participants were familiar with Jim Crow laws, describing them as state-sanctioned systems of segregation and racial oppression. Responses demonstrated strong awareness of how systemic racism has shaped the lived experience of African Americans. This

foundation proved helpful in engaging the historical dimensions of the faith discussed in the Week Four module.

11. How did the church affect the Civil Rights Movement? This question was designed to determine if the participant has any prior knowledge of the subject discussed in week four. Most participants understood the central role of the church in the Civil Rights Movement. They named leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., referenced churches as organizing centers, and cited the spiritual encouragement provided by the Black Church. Their reflections confirmed a collective appreciation for the church's historic role in justice work, which was affirmed and expanded upon during project discussions.

Journal Prompts

Responses are not included, as only four journals were submitted with thorough answers.

Week One - Have I been an effective evangelist? Why or Why Not? This gives participants an opportunity for self-reflection regarding this theological point.

Week Two - Why is it important for me to know about Africans in the Bible? This gives participants the opportunity to give their own meaning to the information gained in the lesson.

Week Three - How do I feel knowing the importance of Africans in the early church? This gives participants the opportunity to give their own meaning to the information gained in the lesson.

Week Four - Would I be a bolder witness if I lived during slavery, Jim Crow, or the Civil Rights movement? Why or why not? This provides the participant with an opportunity to compare their witness with that of historical church leaders.

Week Five - What is my response to "Christianity is a White man's religion?" This allows participants to combine the information they have learned and express it in a way that is comfortable for them.

Individual Interview Questions

What are your thoughts on the last six weeks? Participants expressed overwhelmingly positive reflections on the six-week project. Several described the sessions as “eye-opening,” “empowering,” and “much needed.” They appreciated the intentional focus on African American identity within the Christian tradition, with many stating that they had never encountered such teaching in church or theological settings before. Overall, the participants found the project relevant, affirming, and spiritually enriching.

Do you feel more comfortable sharing the Gospel than you did when this session started? All participants reported feeling more comfortable sharing the gospel than they had before the project began. Several noted that the biblical and historical content gave them confidence to speak about Christianity with more authority, especially in conversations with younger Black men. Others mentioned that the group discussions, journaling exercises, and relational evangelism model helped shift their mindset from fear and inadequacy to a posture of boldness and compassion.

Why or why not? Participants who reported increased comfort attributed it to several key factors: the clarity of the teaching, the relevance of the historical content, the small-group format, and the opportunity to reflect through journaling and discussion. They felt that the environment was nonjudgmental and affirming, which helped them be honest and open. Some participants noted that they still had areas for personal growth, particularly in initiating conversations with strangers, but felt that the sessions provided a solid foundation.

Post-Project Questionnaire Responses

What is evangelism? After completing the project sessions, participants demonstrated a deeper understanding of evangelism. They commonly described it not only as 'sharing the gospel,' but also as a Spirit-led mission of reconciliation. Several referenced biblical texts, such as the Great Commission (Mt. 28:19-20) and 2 Corinthians 5:20. They recognized as both proclamation and embodiment of the message of Christ.

What is relational evangelism? By the end of the project, participants had become familiar with the term 'relational evangelism' and articulated it as sharing the gospel through authentic, trust-based relationships. They spoke of evangelism as a lifestyle marked by intentional presence, vulnerability, and consistency. They acknowledged that relational evangelism was particularly effective in reaching young African American men.

Do you consider yourself an evangelist? More participants identified themselves as evangelists following the sessions. While some still expressed humility about the title, they understood that being an evangelist does not require formal credentials but a

willingness to share the love of Christ. Even those previously hesitant reported an increased sense of responsibility and readiness to witness within their communities.

Describe your comfort level in sharing the gospel with strangers. Participants reported greater comfort in sharing the gospel, especially when doing so through relational means. They described feeling more prepared, confident, and authentic in their approach. The training and historical grounding in the lessons gave them the tools to overcome previous fears or uncertainties.

Do you agree with the statement that Christianity is the ‘White Man’s religion’? All participants rejected this statement by the end of the project. They confidently cited historical and biblical evidence to support their understanding that Christianity has deep roots in Africa. The sessions helped them disentangle faith from colonial narratives and reclaim Christianity as a global and liberating faith tradition.

Please explain your answer to the previous question. Participants offered well-informed and nuanced explanations. They referenced African figures in Scripture, Early Church leaders such as Augustine and Tertullian, and the geographical origins of Christianity in North Africa and the Middle East. Their responses indicated a strengthened cultural and theological identity.

Can you name any Africans in scripture? All participants were able to name at least two Africans in Scripture, including Simon of Cyrene and the Ethiopian eunuch. Some identified additional figures, demonstrating improved biblical literacy and awareness of Africa’s presence in the redemptive narrative of Scripture.

Can you name any Africans in the Early Church? Participants were able to identify major African Church Fathers such as Augustine, Origen, and Tertullian. They

expressed surprise and pride in learning that such foundational figures in Christian theology were African, and they valued this newfound connection to their spiritual heritage.

Who is Nat Turner? By the end of the project, all participants could accurately identify Nat Turner as a Black preacher and revolutionary leader of a slave rebellion. They viewed Turner as part of a broader tradition of faith-fueled resistance and recognized the theological significance of his actions.

What was Jim Crow? Participants demonstrated a clear understanding of Jim Crow as a system of racial segregation and legal discrimination. They connected this history to present-day struggles for justice and reflected on how the Black Church had served as a source of strength and advocacy throughout this period.

How did the Church affect the Civil Rights Movement? Participants described the Black Church as a vital engine of the Civil Rights Movement. They mentioned leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the use of churches as organizing spaces, and the spiritual resources drawn from faith traditions. Their reflections showed increased appreciation for the church's prophetic witness and their potential to carry that legacy forward.

Conclusion

The "Who Am I" project proved to be an effective and impactful initiative within the Greater Fellowship Full Gospel Baptist Church. Designed to equip Black men to evangelize to young African American men through a culturally informed and relational approach, the project successfully aligned its theological, historical, and pastoral aims

with the lived experiences of its participants. While the project faced minor issues with consistent attendance and journal submission, the overall response from participants, as well as the depth of engagement observed during the workshops and interviews, indicated that the program resonated deeply. Participants demonstrated measurable growth in both theological confidence and cultural understanding, which was affirmed in post-project interviews and reflective discussions. The integration of Afrocentric historical content with practical evangelism techniques offered a compelling and empowering narrative that allowed participants to reimagine their role as witnesses and leaders within their community.

Several key elements of the project contributed to its success. First, the decision to focus on relational evangelism rather than formulaic outreach enabled participants to connect more authentically with the material and with one another. Second, the Afrocentric theological education component helped dispel harmful misconceptions about Christianity being a "White man's religion," thereby fostering renewed confidence and ownership of the faith. Third, the Zoom-based format allowed for flexibility and accessibility, accommodating participants' schedules and reducing barriers to participation. The structured curriculum, clear journal prompts, and integration of storytelling were also well-received. Participants were able to connect their personal experiences to theological truths, thus deepening their spiritual formation. Finally, the individual interviews conducted after the training provided rich qualitative data that revealed personal transformation, increased comfort in sharing the gospel, and a genuine enthusiasm for further ministry.

Despite the project's overall success, it did encounter challenges. Attendance was inconsistent, with only two of the six sessions achieving full participation. This inconsistency impacted group continuity and limited the potential for deeper collective dialogue. Similarly, journal responses were sporadic. Although journals were distributed and assigned weekly, only four were returned with thorough reflections. This reduced the amount of written data available for analysis and reflection. Another limitation was the relatively short duration of the program. Six weeks proved sufficient for introducing key concepts, but several participants expressed a desire for more time to process the information and continue the discussions. Additionally, the online format, while convenient, limited some of the organic fellowship and bonding that can occur in in-person settings. Technical challenges and varying levels of digital literacy also occasionally affected participation.

Future iterations of the project would benefit from a few strategic changes. First, extending the program from six to eight weeks could allow for deeper engagement with each topic and more time for personal reflection and application. Second, incorporating mid-week check-ins or informal gatherings could help build stronger community bonds and increase accountability. Third, journal writing might be supplemented or replaced by more interactive formats such as voice recordings, group reflections, or video diaries, to accommodate various learning and expression styles. Fourth, the recruitment process could be expanded to include not only current church leaders but also newer members and younger men who may benefit from early exposure to these concepts. Lastly, implementing a capstone activity, such as a community outreach project or

group presentation, could help solidify learning and provide a public witness to the training's effectiveness.

The participants experienced noticeable growth in confidence, theological knowledge, and cultural awareness. They began the program with varying degrees of comfort regarding evangelism and limited knowledge of African contributions to Christian history. By the project's conclusion, most participants expressed a stronger sense of identity, calling, and responsibility to share the gospel in culturally relevant ways. In interviews, several noted that they now saw themselves as equipped leaders who could mentor others. The impact extended beyond individual participants to the wider church context. The project highlighted the need for culturally responsive ministry and opened conversations among leadership about revising traditional evangelistic approaches. Participants also expressed a desire to take their learning beyond the church walls, sharing their faith in their workplaces, families, and communities. The project helped plant seeds of transformation not only within individual hearts but also within the broader ministry culture of Greater Fellowship.

The success of this initial project phase points toward several future directions. First, there is an opportunity to develop an ongoing evangelism cohort or ministry team composed of project alumni who can continue to grow, support one another, and lead new efforts. Second, the curriculum could be refined and formalized into a reusable training resource, complete with digital materials, video content, and facilitator guides. Third, collaboration with other churches and ministries in similar contexts could allow for the expansion of the model and greater kingdom impact. The project's foundation

provides a solid basis for ongoing ministry to young Black men, and sustaining momentum will be critical to ensuring long-term results.

The vision for this ministry is expansive. The long-term goal is to develop a replicable and scalable model of culturally grounded, relational evangelism that empowers Black men to become confident ambassadors of the gospel within their communities. This includes developing mentorship pipelines, hosting city-wide workshops, and producing multimedia resources that speak directly to the identity, history, and spiritual needs of young African American men. The ministry could evolve into a hub for contextualized evangelism training, offering not only theological education but also life coaching, leadership development, and community advocacy. The dream is to see churches across the country embracing this model, reclaiming the narrative of Christianity as deeply rooted in African heritage and lived out through genuine relationships.

There is a definite desire to repeat and expand this project. The overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants affirms the need for continued implementation. Future cohorts may be tailored for different demographics, such as young adults, new believers, or men outside the church community. It could also include a module designed to assist Black women facing similar challenges as their male counterparts. The next iteration could incorporate lessons learned from this pilot project and emphasize broader recruitment, increased follow-up support, and more effective tracking of spiritual growth. By continually refining the curriculum and structure, the ministry can build on its initial momentum and deepen its impact.

Publishing is a natural and desirable next step. The content, structure, and results of the "Who Am I" project offer valuable contributions to the fields of pastoral theology, Black Church studies, and evangelism. A published version could take the form of a ministry manual, a scholarly article, or even a devotional series centered on relational evangelism for African American men. There is also potential to adapt the material for use in academic coursework or seminary training modules. Publishing would not only extend the reach of this work but also validate its significance within the broader Christian community. It would also offer a powerful testimony of how culturally-rooted relational ministry can transform individuals and churches alike.

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